



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. B1811 Copyright No. ....

Shelf. M35

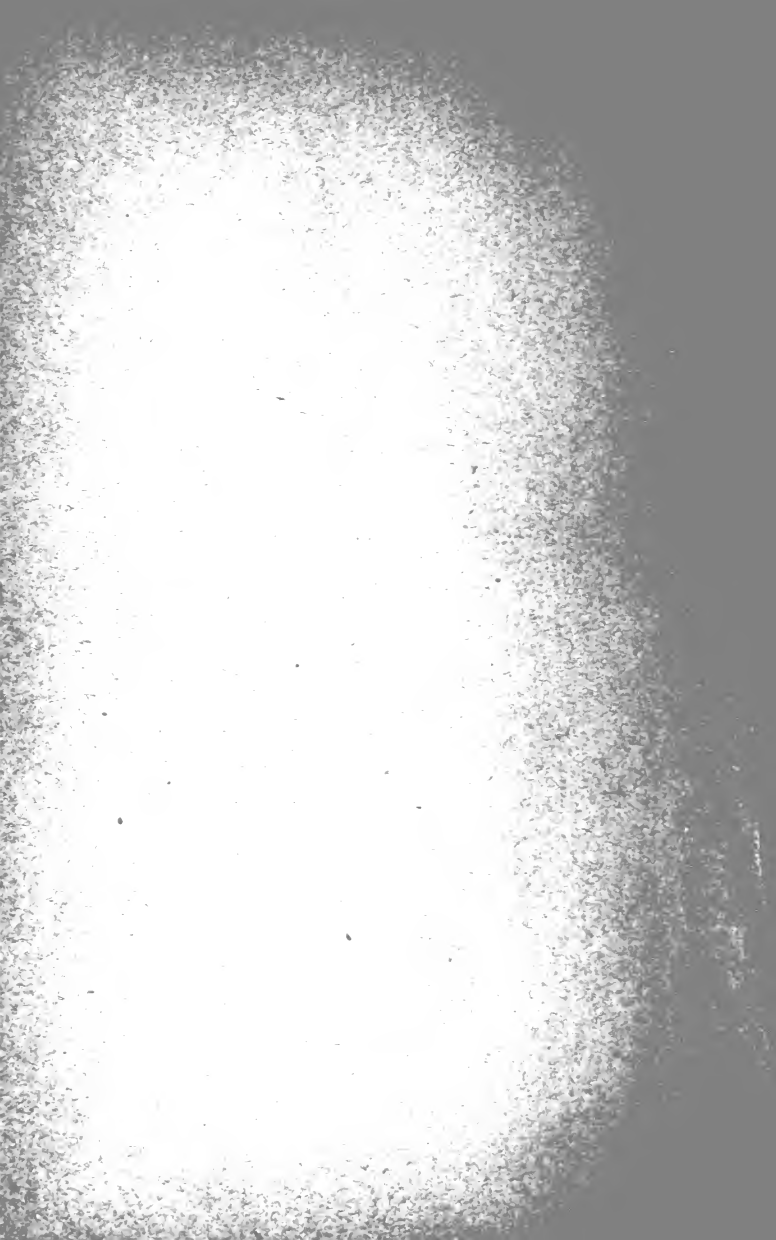
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.











*Ch. 24913 R*

THE  
TOKEN OF THE COVENANT,  
OR THE  
RIGHT USE OF BAPTISM.

*Ch. 24913 R*

BY R. H. MAHON, D.D  
MEMPHIS CONFERENCE.



NASHVILLE:  
SOUTHERN METHODIST PUBLISHING HOUSE.  
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR.  
1886.

*— 0*

BY 811  
M35

---

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1886,  
By R. H. MAHON,  
in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

---

**THE LIBRARY  
OF CONGRESS  
—  
WASHINGTON**

## PREFACE.

---

ANOTHER book on baptism may seem to be superfluous. But as long as the question remains unsettled, men will think and speak. It is idle to attribute the divisions on this subject to mere prejudice. There is doubtless enough of that, but the main cause is an honest difference of opinion as to the teaching of the Scriptures. It is by line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, that all differences are to be finally adjusted. The present treatise does not pretend to effect a final settlement of the question. The author thinks, however, that he here contributes somewhat to a better understanding of the subject by a clear and definite statement of the question at issue, and by the *arrangement* of the argument, if in nothing else.

The *covenant* character of the Christian ordinance is the basis of the argument for both the Design and the Subjects. Baptism is presented as the token of the covenant of grace instead of the door into the Church. This I regard as the Scripture teaching, and beyond refutation. Under the Design of Baptism a careful and critical analysis is given of all those Scripture texts that are involved in this controversy, which is no small feature of the work. As to the Subjects of Baptism no allusion is made to the abun-

dant testimony of the Fathers concerning the baptism of children in the early times. The argument is purposely confined to the teaching of the Scriptures. What is demanded of us is Scripture proof. I think I have given it, and that too in a way that has not been presented by another.

Few ordinary readers understand what is meant by the "action" of baptism as it is used in this controversy by immersionists. It is from this stand-point that the mode of administering the ordinance is here discussed. The argument is presented so that the humblest reader may see clearly the truth of our proposition. To adduce the many instances of the use of *baptizo* by classical Greek writers would be to repeat what has been often done, and to increase the size of this volume beyond my wish. I have therefore given the use of the word as it appears in the holy writings, intending throughout to make a purely scriptural argument in favor of the Methodist doctrine. No attempt is made at fine writing. As few words and as plain words as possible are employed to convey the meaning. If what is here written shall contribute to the furtherance of the truth, I shall feel amply rewarded.

R. H. MAHON.

MEMPHIS, TENN., July 1, 1886.

# CONTENTS.

—

## *PART FIRST.*

### DESIGN OF BAPTISM.

PAGE

Chapter I. Views of the Subject—Baptism not Designed to Represent the Burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.....	9
Chapter II. Baptism not the Instrument of Regeneration nor a Condition of Pardon.....	17
Chapter III. Scripture Texts Supposed to Favor the Doctrine of Baptism for the Remission of Sins Examined and Explained: Mark i. 4; xvi. 16; John iii. 5.	28
Chapter IV. Examination of Scripture Texts (continued): Acts ii. 38; 1 Pet. iii. 20; Rom. vi. 1-4; Titus iii. 5 .....	43
Chapter V. Justification by Faith Only.....	65

## *PART SECOND.*

### SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

Chapter I. The Question Stated—God's Covenant with Abraham Stated and Explained, and the Relation of Children to it Established .....	79
Chapter II. The Perpetuity of the Abrahamic Covenant.....	93
Chapter III. Baptism the Sign and Seal of the Covenant, and not the Door of the Church.....	105
Chapter IV. New Testament Authority for Infant Baptism.....	116
Chapter V. Objections Stated and Answered .....	123



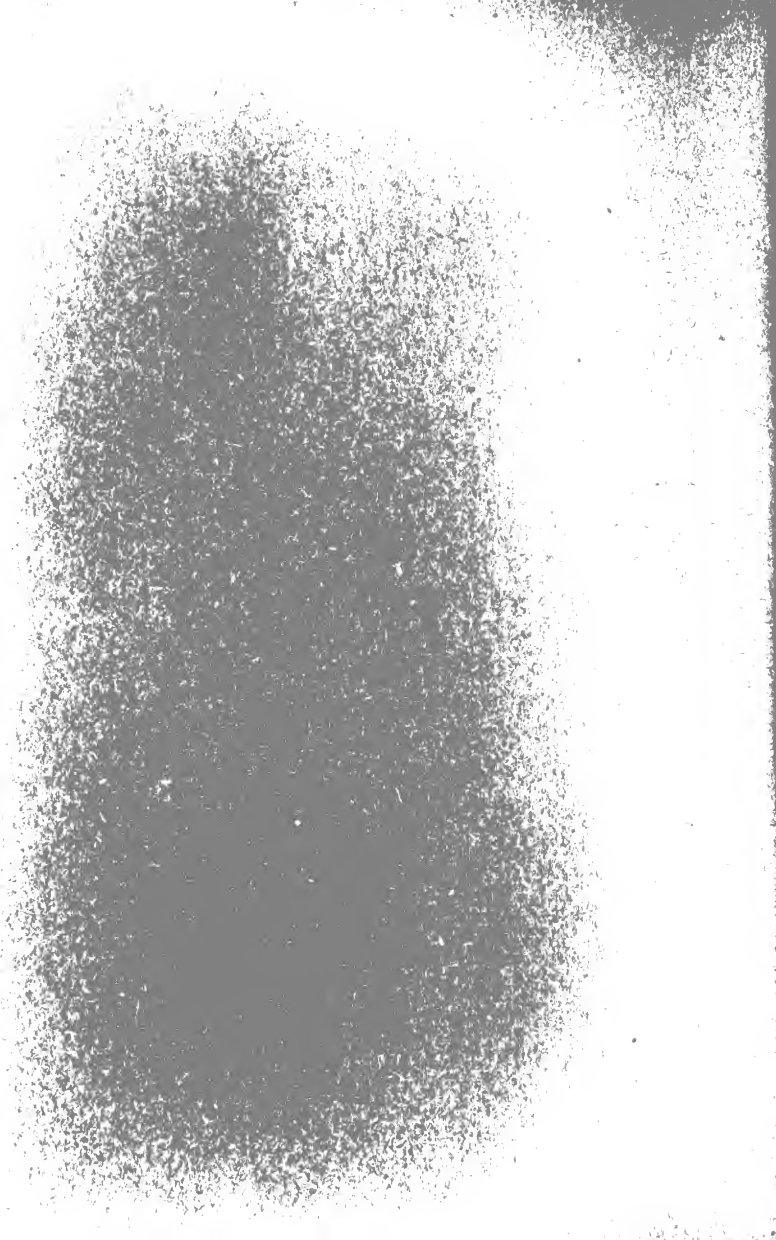
*PART THIRD.*

## MODE OF BAPTISM.

PAGE

Chapter I. The Question Stated According to the Views of Leading Immersionists—The “Definite Act” Theory Most Indefinite.....	147
Chapter II. Testimony of the Lexicons.....	162
Chapter III. Instances of Baptism in the New Testament—John’s Baptism—Baptism of Jesus.....	178
Chapter IV. Baptism of the Eunuch—Red Sea Baptism—Baptized into Christ—Baptism not a Burial..	192
Chapter V. Proofs in Favor of Pouring and Sprinkling.....	210
MEANING OF BAPTO.....	213
MEANING OF BAPTIZO.....	217
BAPTISM OF NAAMAN.....	217
BAPTISM FROM A DEAD BODY.....	220
BAPTISM OF JUDITH.....	223
BAPTISM BY INIQUITY.....	225
DIVERS BAPTISMS.....	226
JEWISH BAPTISMS.....	228
BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST.....	232

PART FIRST.  
DESIGN OF BAPTISM



## CHAPTER I.

VIEWS OF THE SUBJECT.—BAPTISM NOT DESIGNED TO REPRESENT THE BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

---

ONE would suppose that a matter so plain and so easy of understanding as the design or purpose of Christian baptism would have been settled long ago, or rather would never have become the subject of controversy at all. But such is not the case. Differences arose in the early history of the Church that have not yet been adjusted; indeed, some of the most fiery discussions have prevailed about this question, and about all cognate questions of baptism. Denominations of Christians are widely separated from each other on this issue, and people of the same Church, in some instances, entertain very different opinions concerning it. Not only the design but the subjects and the mode of baptism have been and still are a bone of contention. The roots of the controversy, however, are in the design of the ordinance. If this could be definitely settled, the whole of the baptismal controversy would soon come to an end.

I do not presume to be able to contribute all that is necessary to the adjustment of the dif-

ferences held in all sincerity and candor by opposing parties; but I trust I shall be able to contribute somewhat to a better understanding of the subject. A fair and candid discussion of the matter is at least in order. It is remarkable to observe the great divergence of opinion respecting the meaning of baptism. Baptists, for example, teach that baptism is intended to represent the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and that it is a mark or sign of regeneration to them that receive it. In consequence it is, according to this view, to be administered only to such as profess regeneration, and must invariably be an immersion. The immersion in water is an attempt to imitate the manner of the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; that as he went down into the grave and in due time arose from it, so we in our baptism must in humble imitation of him go down into the water and come up again out of it.

To support this extreme view an appeal is sometimes made to the use of the sacrament of the Supper, which is said to have been instituted to represent Christ's *death* as a standing memorial, as baptism does his burial and resurrection. But this is not the purport of the Supper. It does not represent his death—

that is, the *manner* of it. It represents his "body" which was given for the life of the world, that as bread sustains—gives life, health, strength—so is Jesus Christ the life of the world. The Supper itself is simply a memorial-service, in the keeping of which we do "show forth the death" of our Lord until his coming again—that is, our belief and interest in his death, and not the manner of his dying at all.

There is to my mind little or no foundation in the Bible for the idea that baptism was appointed to represent the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The only passages of scripture that mention baptism in connection with burial and resurrection are Rom. vi. 4 and Col. ii. 12, and these, though relied on mainly, are very far from teaching that the original design of the Christian ordinance is to represent to the mind the burial and resurrection of our Lord.

In Romans it is said: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." To sustain the theory this ought to read: "That like as Christ was put into the grave and raised up from the

dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also ought to be buried with him by baptism into the water and raised up out of it, that we might represent his burial and resurrection." But this is not the meaning of the scripture. If baptism is designed to represent or signify a burial at all, it is not the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but the mystical burial and resurrection of believers in him. And even this is not the prime idea of the ordinance. The idea in the text is that "we are buried with him by baptism unto death." Not, indeed, that we are put under the water, or buried in any physical sense whatever, but buried *into death*. The burial is mystical. With those who enter a new life there is a crucifixion of the flesh, and the affections and lusts thereof, and they are said to *die unto* the world. It is not a physical death. They do not go out of the world. To complete the argument the apostle extends the figure and speaks of a burial and a resurrection succeeding this death to sin. The character of the burial must correspond with the character of the death. If the death were physical the burial would be physical. But the death is mystical, spiritual, a death to sin and to the world. The burial and resurrection are therefore mystical and spiritual,



having reference to newness of life on the part of the believer. Now baptism was not intended by its mode or manner of performance to represent either the burial and resurrection of Christ or that of the believer; but the design and purpose of it contemplated death to sin and newness of life to every one who is baptized unto Jesus Christ.

I know it is said, "For if we be planted together in the likeness of his death we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." But the comparison here is not between Christ's burial and resurrection and our baptism, as if we are obliged to be baptized after the manner of a burial—that is, immersed—in order that we may represent Christ's burial; but the comparison is between Christ's physical death and resurrection and our death to sin and quickening unto righteousness, or newness of life—that as certainly as he died to this world and revived, so must we be associated with him in our death to sin. And if we be thus planted together we shall certainly be in the likeness of his resurrection. To be planted together does not mean to be baptized, neither do we bear the likeness of his resurrection in ascending from the watery grave, but in being quickened by the Spirit into a higher and better life.

It is very certain, therefore, that this scripture does not favor in the least the idea that the aim and purpose of baptism are to represent as a sort of standing memorial the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And what is true of this passage is also true of Col. ii. 12, which is no doubt parallel to it in meaning as well as in expression. The truth is, an immersion in water is a very poor representation of the burial and resurrection of Jesus. Those familiar with the place and manner of his burial, and the circumstances attending his resurrection, can see little or no comparison between them and an immersion in water.

To carry out the figure, it would be appropriate to keep the candidate under the water three days. I wonder that some strict constructionist has not suggested it long ago. It is impossible to reconcile this view of the design of baptism with other distinctive teachings of the Baptist Church itself: for instance, they tell us that baptism was introduced by John the Baptist—said to be the founder of their Church—and that the design of John's baptism and that of Christ and his apostles was one and the same. If this be so, and baptism is intended to represent the burial and resurrection of Christ, why was it that John

himself did not know that fact? He certainly knew the purpose of his own baptism. But he never mentioned it in connection with any burial. The truth is, Christ's death and resurrection were a profound mystery to John, as they were to all the people. He baptized, he said, "unto repentance." It in no sense signified the resurrection of Christ, and had no reference whatever to his death and burial. Neither did the disciples of Christ understand this to be the meaning of baptism. They administered the ordinance (John iv. 2), and therefore did certainly know something of its purpose and design. But we gather from the Scriptures that they knew nothing of the resurrection of Christ from the dead before his passion (Mark ix. 31, 32): "For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. *But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.*" But that is the very thing they must have understood, if they were baptizing all along to represent the fact to the minds of the people.

If the baptism that John preached and Christian baptism are one in design, and were intended to represent the burial and resurrec-

tion of Jesus, why should all those whom John baptized be required to submit to the rite again under the ministry of the apostles? John baptized all Jerusalem and they of Judea, and of the coast round about the Jordan. Every one of them who accepted Christ had to be baptized again, which would certainly have not been the case if the design of baptism was the same in both instances.

It is useless to pursue this subject farther, for it is evident that the original intent of baptism is not to represent the burial and resurrection of Jesus our Lord from the dead.

## CHAPTER II.

### BAPTISM NOT THE INSTRUMENT OF REGENERATION NOR A CONDITION OF PARDON.

---

ANOTHER view of the subject is that commonly held by the Romish Church, a part of the Lutheran Church, and all High-church Episcopalians. It is usually styled the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. It is an extreme view. According to it the water in baptism is somehow empowered to wash away sins, both original depravity and the guilt of actual transgressions. This doctrine has been taught by Church councils and handed down by prelates until multitudes accept it without stopping to inquire for themselves as to its truth or scripturalness.

It is not worth while to present the unreasonableness of such a doctrine as a proof or remonstrance against its acceptance. The credulity that can discern in the bread and wine of the eucharist the *real* body and the *real* blood of Jesus Christ is not to be daunted by the unreasonableness of things. Reason is out of the question. It is simply a matter of assertion and belief. There are some passages of scripture that may seemingly favor the notion that baptism is an instrument in regeneration.

I say seemingly, because there is not one that really does so teach. These scriptures shall be examined and explained in due time, but it must be done in connection with the answer that may be given to another view of the subject much like this but still different from it. I mean the doctrine commonly held by the Christian Church—sometimes called “Disciples of Christ,” but more generally known as Campbellites. The Rev. Alexander Campbell, the founder of this sect, and his followers were for a long time supposed to adhere to the Romish theory of baptismal regeneration. Indeed, many of the utterances of Mr. Campbell, put forth in his various writings on the subject, justified the suspicion, as did also some of the utterances of the leading men of that Church. But of late years the doctrine of that denomination is more closely defined and much better understood, if indeed its teaching on the subject has not been modified in some measure.

The Campbellite theory (I use the word Campbellite in no offensive sense) is, that while there is no virtue in the water in baptism to wash away sins, and nothing in the performance that can merit salvation, yet it has pleased God to appoint baptism to be a *condition of pardon to penitent believers*. That it

is a sort of test performance by which one's faith and willingness to obey God are tried and proved to be genuine, and that pardon or remission of sins is offered to penitent believers *for and on account of the obedience rendered to God in baptism.*

This is about as clear and definite a statement of the doctrine as I can make. This is the teaching of the ablest representatives of that Church, and, as is apparent, differs widely from the theory of water baptism regeneration. It has gained considerable credence and boasts of mighty scriptural support. It shall be our business, therefore, to examine some of the arguments and scripture proofs usually employed to sustain this dogma. In doing so, if I am at all successful in demonstrating the unscripturalness of the doctrine, I shall of course in the same measure refute the cognate doctrine of baptismal regeneration. For although they are distinct in form and statement, yet they stand or fall together, relying as they do on the same scripture texts for support.

In support of this doctrine it is assumed that while faith is the ordinary means of salvation and the only condition of justification, yet before faith itself can be recognized and par-



don granted *it must necessarily culminate in some act of obedience to God.* The Scriptures, we are told, have appointed baptism as *the act in which faith must declare itself, and that it indeed is the practical test of faith.* This assumption—for it is nothing more—the advocates have illustrated in various ways. Take the following: “At one time the Israelites as they passed through the wilderness were bitten by serpents. For their cure God commanded that a pole should be erected and on it a brazen serpent should be placed. The bitten ones were commanded to look, with the promise that they should live. Surely there was no efficacy in the mere act of looking, nor was there any efficacy in the brazen serpent to heal them. Yet when they did look they were healed. *Now just as one would look in obedience to the command of God and he was healed, so it is that a man may be baptized and have his sins remitted.*” (Wilkes and Ditzler Debate, page 207.) This is a very clear statement of the point at issue, but a most unfortunate illustration for the doctrine itself. It is the very figure employed in the Scriptures to show the relation of *faith*, and not of baptism, to the remission of sins. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be

lifted up, that whosoever *believeth* on him [not whosoever is baptized] may have eternal life." The point of comparison is between looking and believing, not between looking and being baptized.

The marriage contract is sometimes mentioned as analogous. As the marriage of two persons is never complete until the engagement is witnessed formally as the law directs, so it is affirmed the remission of sins is never granted until faith culminates in obedience to the ordinance of baptism. But there is no analogy between the two; for while the law requires that no marriage agreement shall be considered consummated until formally witnessed, the law of God does not restrain pardon until the faith of the individual shall have declared itself in obedience to the rite of baptism, or in any other practical way.

Naaman the Syrian, it is said, was not healed of his leprosy until, in obedience to the command of the prophet, he had dipped himself in the Jordan. Very true; but baptism is not to us what this dipping was to Naaman. The prophet commanded him to go wash in Jordan, with the assurance that he should recover. But God has not coupled any such assurance with baptism. The meaning of this doctrine

is that we are justified not by faith, as the Scriptures say, but by faith and baptism, or, as may very properly be stated, faith and works. This I conceive to be unsound and unscriptural to the core. It requires that faith in Christ, which is the spirit of obedience, shall not be considered acceptable before God *until the willingness or disposition to obey* has appeared in some outward actual work of obedience. No one can object to practical obedience whenever and wherever there is opportunity. Indeed, without it faith is dead, as the apostle James declares. But it is not true that the will, the *purpose* to obey must invariably be accompanied by the deed in order that the commandment may be kept, or that faith may be considered genuine; for if that were true, then it would also necessarily follow that the disposition or purpose to *disobey* the will of God in any respect would have to manifest itself in the act of disobedience before guilt could accrue. But this we know is not the law. It is for the spirit of obedience and for the spirit of disobedience that we are accounted righteous or guilty before God, and not alone for the deeds done in the body. "For we know," says Paul, "that the law is *spiritual*." It may therefore be violated in heart and in spirit.

In illustration of this Jesus gave an example: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already *in his heart*." The intent, the purpose, the desire, were there, and the law was violated. The want of opportunity for the thought of the heart to execute its purpose in the act does not in the least lessen the guilt in the sight of God. Just so it is with the spirit of obedience. It is the willingness and purpose to obey that God esteems, whether the opportunity for practical obedience appear at once or not. Of course if there be opportunity practical obedience will follow, but it is not necessary that it should do so at all times to fulfill the demands of the law. As we have often heard, "God sometimes accepts the will for the deed." And even where there is outward conformity to the law it is not imputed at all for righteousness. It is always the purpose of the heart that gives complexion to the deed and to the character of the man.

We must consider, too, that if the principle be true that faith, before it can be imputed for righteousness or be considered genuine, must demonstrate itself in some act of practical obedience—as the advocates of this theory affirm—then it must have always been

the case; for it must be of the very nature and character of the law that it should be so. If it has always been the case, then I ask, On what condition was justification or the pardon of sins offered before baptism was instituted? What *act* of obedience did faith have to culminate in all along from Abraham to Christ in order to obtain God's mercy? There was certainly something appointed for faith to declare itself in if this doctrine be true. There must have been some *test*, so to speak. What, then, was it?

We cannot evade this by assuming that there was no remission of sins under the former dispensations. Abel obtained witness that he was righteous. Abraham was justified, and became the father of the faithful. And so of a long list of worthies, who, it is said, "all died in the faith." I repeat, then, if faith must necessarily appear in practical form before it can be imputed for righteousness, in what way was this done all the while before baptism was instituted? If we say that it was by obedience to the moral law—the Ten Commandments—the apostle stoutly affirms "that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." Or if we say that it was by obedience to the ceremonial law, which consist-

ed in sacrificial offerings and forms of worship, then we are again confronted by the Scriptures. In Heb. x. 1-4: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, *can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.* But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*" So we see that sacrifices could not serve the purpose.

That which stood related to the old dispensation as baptism does to the new was circumcision. If any thing can be said to have served as a trial or test of faith it certainly must be this. But circumcision, though it was the sign and seal of the covenant, was never a condition of pardon or means of justification. Abraham's faith was imputed unto him for righteousness *before he was circumcised*, "and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." And the Scriptures repeatedly affirm that circumcision sustained no such relation to the remission of sins. The idea,

therefore, that faith, in order to secure remission of sins, must appear in some practical work of obedience before pardon can be found, is without foundation and wholly against the teaching of the Scriptures.

But, it is asked, can any be saved who are not baptized? That depends entirely upon circumstances. If one cannot be baptized for lack of opportunity, or for want of ability in some way, he may certainly be saved without baptism. But if one should despise the ordinance, or through indifference neglect it, he could lay no claim to the divine favor. But this is no mark that baptism is a condition of pardon or of salvation in the important sense of which we speak. For the same may be said of every other moral precept or positive commandment. Take the fourth commandment, for example: "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." If one willfully profane the day of the Lord, will he be pleasing or accepted before God? Certainly not. But does it follow by any means that the keeping of the Sabbath-day is a necessary condition of pardon? Most assuredly not. And yet if we break this commandment we are guilty, and justly condemned. One may keep the Sabbath-day all his life, and do many other good



deeds besides, and yet for lack of the one thing needful never obtain deliverance from sin. So it is with baptism. It is enjoined, and we must observe it. To disregard it is to forfeit the divine favor. But the keeping of this command does not by any means secure the remission of sins. Baptism is a positive institute, and we are bound to receive it. Those who neglect it, or willfully reject it, have little of the spirit of obedience to Christ. But the ordinance was never intended to be a test of our faith, nor a condition of pardon. Remission of sins is dependent on conditions entirely different. Those who hold this theory, therefore, have wholly missed the purpose and design of Christian baptism.

## CHAPTER III.

SCRIPTURE TEXTS SUPPOSED TO FAVOR THE DOCTRINE  
OF BAPTISM FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS EXAMINED  
AND EXPLAINED: MARK I. 4, XVI. 16; JOHN III. 5.

---

I SHALL in the next place consider those passages of scripture that are supposed to teach the doctrine that baptism is "for the remission of sins" in some way. While some of these passages may seemingly favor the doctrine, I think it will appear, by fair construction and under a close analysis, that not one single passage in the word of God gives real countenance to this monstrous dogma.

The first to be examined, because the first in order in the New Testament, is Mark i. 4: "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

Why the baptism of John, the forerunner of Christ, should be offered in proof that *Christian* baptism is "for the remission of sins" I cannot imagine, unless it is because of the mere association of the word baptism with remission. It requires but a little reflection, however, to enable one to see that the object of John's baptism was not to secure in any imme-

diate way the pardon of sins, but that it was for a very different purpose. The advocates of this theory themselves hold that the plan of redemption was not fully perfected and revealed until the day of Pentecost, when the door of the kingdom of heaven was opened to all nations by the ministry of Peter and the other apostles. Now if this be true, and the remission of sins was not granted (as the friends of this doctrine affirm) until Pentecost, how could John's baptism, which fulfilled the purpose of its appointment *before* Pentecost, have been the immediate condition of pardon? It must be remembered, too, that John baptized immense multitudes—"all Jerusalem, and they of Judea, and the coast round about the Jordan." But, I ask, were the sins of all these people remitted, and assurance of pardon granted unto them? This must have been the case, if the object of John's baptism was to serve as an instrument of salvation or a condition of pardon to them. But that it was not the case is evident from the universal ignorance of salvation among the people when Jesus and his disciples began their ministry.

And again, how can we reconcile with this idea the fact that all those whom John baptized were made the subjects of Christian bap-

tism when they professed faith in Christ under the ministry of the apostles? We read in Acts xix. 1-5: "And it came to pass that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him; that is, on Christ Jesus. *When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*" These people knew nothing about the gift of the Holy Ghost and the assurance of pardon. They had only been taught under John to repent, and they had engaged to receive Christ when he should be declared unto them. But beyond this they knew nothing. If John's baptism had been for the remission of sins, however—just as baptism now is affirmed to be—they ought to have been better informed about the things of the kingdom. And besides, it would appear to be wholly unnecessary for

Paul to require that baptism be administered to them in the name of Christ. A faithful performance of the condition one time would, it seems, be quite sufficient. One sees at a glance the difficulty—yea, the real inconsistency—of supposing that John did baptize the people that they might obtain the remission of their sins. Such a benefit was not conferred upon any of the multitude, for that was, in fact, not the reason that he baptized.

The real object of John's baptism, like that of his ministry, is very clearly set forth in the Scriptures. Says Paul: "*John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him; that is, on Christ Jesus.*" The theme, the burden of John's ministry was repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. All who took warning from his exhortation, and engaged to repent and accept Christ when he should be announced unto them, were baptized. As the ministry of John was a call to repentance, so his baptism is said to have been "unto repentance." Not, indeed, that it in anywise *conferred* repentance or the remission of sins; but it was the formal *ratification of an agreement* to repent and to believe on the Messiah. Baptism was in this instance

just what it is in every other—the *sign and seal of an obligation*. But the obligation assumed under John was to *repent*. Baptism signified their consent and readiness to do that work by which “the way of the Lord would be made ready.” If remission of sins was contemplated at all, as we certainly must admit, it was in a remote sense, and because remission of sins *depended upon repentance* as the preparatory work, and not upon baptism. “Baptism of repentance for remission of sins” does not mean that baptism itself submitted was for remission—that is, that on that account remission was granted. We have seen how impossible that was. But baptism was the exponent, the representative of repentance, because it was by this means that the obligation of repentance was formally assumed. *Repentance* was the supreme duty of the hour, and every one was exhorted to “bring forth fruits *meet* for repentance.” Repentance was the assurance of the divine favor, and not baptism.

Another text very confidently relied upon to prove the doctrine is Mark xvi. 16: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” This, it is supposed, leaves no doubt as to the absolute necessity of baptism to salvation. Whether it is necessary, however, as an instrument in

our salvation or as a condition on the performance of which we are to be saved, we are left to judge for ourselves. Some say one thing and some another; but where such vast issues are at stake the proof should be plain and positive, and not doubtful. That baptism is *important* we do not deny. On the contrary we insist that it is of divine appointment, and that the obligation is imperative. The real purpose of this text seems to be to enforce the obligation and to impose it upon every one. But we are not discussing the *duty* or *obligation* of baptism, but the design of it, and whether it is a condition of pardon or not. It might stand very closely related to our final salvation, and yet have nothing whatever to do with either the regeneration of our nature or the pardon of our sins. If it be imposed as a duty, then none dare neglect, much less despise it. To do so would be to incur the divine displeasure; but at the same time the performance of that single duty is not to be attended at any time with the immediate blessing of pardon.

It is evident that the salvation mentioned in the text is final salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized *shall be saved*"—not *is* saved already, as if remission of sins were meant. The

word is antithetical to damned: "He that believeth not *shall be damned*"—that is, in the world to come. "He that believeth not is condemned already," though not already damned in a final sense. The obligation both to believe and to be baptized is made imperative, but it does not follow necessarily that baptism secures in any way the remission of sins, for the administration of the ordinance may either precede or succeed the pardon of sins according as other conditions are performed. The requirement is that we be baptized, no matter whether it be antecedent to pardon or not. Circumstances must determine. So we see that this text sheds no light on the *relative position* of the Christian ordinance, or on the *design* of it. It simply imposes the obligation to observe it—that is all.

John iii. 5: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This is one of the strongholds of the doctrine in question. Few passages are relied on with greater assurance to prove it than this. It therefore deserves the more careful notice. Biblical critics are in doubt as to the meaning of the word water here. Some very learned commentators think that it does not relate to water baptism at all, but that it



is wholly figurative. Others, however, think differently. I shall raise no question at present as to the meaning of the terms in the text, but will allow that to "be born of water" means to be baptized with it. Give the theory the benefit of every doubt, and even then it cannot be sustained. All that we ask is a fair and candid interpretation of the words according to established rules.

In the analysis of this oft-repeated but much-abused text, there are several things to be noted that will aid mightily in a clear and definite understanding of it.

First: "Except a *man* be born." The word *man* is generic here, and has no reference at all to sex. The original word, rendered "man," is *Tis*, which means "any one;" or, as we sometimes say, "anybody." Except "any one," therefore—man, woman, child, no matter who—be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. While this is quite agreeable to the views of those who believe in baptismal regeneration, it proves far too much for our immersion brethren, for it proves that baptism must *necessarily* be administered in order to salvation at all; it must apply to all alike, young as well as old. But this of course will include infants, and that is

enough to spoil the very best of argument with some folks. Still we must abide by the text.

Second: "*Be born of water and of the Spirit.*" This gives us some little idea of the meaning of baptism. It is a birth, though the word birth is used in a figurative sense: it denotes state, condition, manner of life, and not specific action. Allowing, then, that to be "born of water" means to be baptized with it, it follows necessarily that to be "born of the Spirit" means to be baptized with it. What is said of one of these things is said also of the other. If one means water baptism, the other must mean Spirit baptism. This is a great gain in the discussion of the text, for we now know what the birth of the Spirit means. It means to be baptized—that is, cleansed, purified, regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The idea, then, is that except a man be baptized with water and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Third: These two things are not synonymous. Water baptism is not spiritual baptism. They are as distinct as can be. The one is outward, physical, and from below; the other is inward, spiritual, and from above, and is the work of the Holy Spirit himself, securing as by a new birth an entrance into another life.

Fourth: Neither are they synchronous. They do not necessarily take place at the same time. True enough, an individual *may* receive the baptism of the Spirit at the very moment when water baptism is conferred, but it is not because there is any *necessary* or immediate relation between them. Ritual baptism sometimes precedes and sometimes it succeeds the blessing of pardon and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Simon, the sorcerer, who is mentioned in Acts viii., was baptized, but it was soon discovered that his "heart was not right in the sight of God," and that he was in the "gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." His baptism neither secured the pardon of his sins nor his spiritual regeneration.

And then again, ritual baptism may *succeed* the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as we see in the case of Cornelius and his friends, reported in Acts x.: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. . . . Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water *that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?* And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." It is a great mistake to suppose that spiritual regeneration is a necessary qualification for baptism. Baptism

in this instance followed the gift of the Holy Spirit, which was graciously poured out to the joy and ecstasy of those that believed. When one is a devout seeker of salvation and is willing to consecrate himself to the service of God, he is ready to be baptized, although he may not yet have realized the assurance of pardon. It is also true that when the heart lays hold of God by faith in Christ Jesus the witness of the Spirit is not delayed for lack of water baptism; for being justified freely *by faith* we "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." But if the Holy Ghost can be granted and people converted, saved, and indeed filled with a spirit of rejoicing before they are baptized at all, as we have shown, how can baptism be "for the remission of sins?"

As water baptism and Spirit baptism, then, are distinct, separate, and independent of each other, it is hardly necessary to add,

Fifth: That one cannot be in order to the other. The question under treatment is that baptism is either the instrument that effects our spiritual regeneration, or is in some way the condition of the pardon of sins. In the analysis given above, this I have abundantly shown to be false. No such idea is contained in this text. It is simply stated that except these

things occur—that one “be born of water and of the Spirit—he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Their relative order and their dependence are not defined, except that they are made independent.

Sixth: In the last place, I beg to note that both water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, taken together, are not to be considered in any sense the condition of pardon or for the remission of sins. “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Kingdom of heaven does not mean the specific blessing of pardon. If it be so construed, and water baptism be made the condition of it, then the birth of the spirit is the condition of it too, for they are both essential prerequisites. But any one can see at a glance that it would be absurd to regenerate one and cleanse him from the *guilt* of sin while the condemnation of it yet remained. To such an extreme are we driven by the unscriptural and unphilosophical interpretation put upon this text. Jesus meant to teach no such doctrine.

The fallacy is in assuming that the words “kingdom of God” mean the same thing as justification or the pardon of sins. “Kingdom of heaven” is not to be limited to that or any

other specific benefit. It includes all the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

The word "kingdom" denotes a certain form of government—a government ruled by a king. In the New Testament the word is of frequent use, and carries the idea of authority and dominion. When John announced that the "kingdom of heaven was at hand," he meant that the administration of Jesus Christ the Son of God was about to begin. The government was upon his shoulder, and all authority was committed to him, and his personal advent was at hand, when an administration should be inaugurated that should culminate in the subjection of all things. This is, of course, a spiritual kingdom, whose dominion is over the minds and hearts of men. It is set for the regulation of morals and not civil rights. Such is the character of the kingdom of heaven. Every kingdom, or government, affords at least two great advantages. First, the favor and protection of the sovereign; and second, the esteem and fellowship of all fellow-citizens or subjects of the same kingdom. Nothing more is intended by any government.

Now if we will view the kingdom of God in this light—which is evidently the true light—we shall be able in a moment to see how it is

and why it is that one must be "born of water and of the Spirit" in order to inherit every advantage of the kingdom of heaven.

The birth of the Spirit, or spiritual regeneration, brings one into *vital* relations to Christ, who is the head of all things. This implies, of course, submission to his authority and perfect obedience to his will; and all who are thus in communion with him are the constant subjects of his love and favor. Water baptism is a symbol of this new life, and although it confers no grace, it is nevertheless an initiation into the favor and friendship—or perhaps I ought to say fellowship—of all loyal subjects of Christ's kingdom, being, as it is, the sign or profession of our submission to his authority. It is in some measure a mark of distinction among believers and a pledge of obedience to Christ. Baptism is here, as in the commission given by Mark, made *obligatory*, but it is not appointed to serve as a condition of pardon. It is sometimes called the *sign* and *seal* of the covenant of grace; but it is not because it *seals* to us necessarily the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, or is a sign that we are *already* the subjects of regenerative grace. Its office is to signify *our* willing obedience to Christ; and it is the formal means by which we ourselves sign or seal—

that is, ratify and confirm—the covenant of faith and obedience. It thus becomes our *formal* initiation into the “kingdom of God.” Such, then, is the work of the Holy Spirit in us and such the office of baptism that both are essential, each in its place, so that no one can be said to participate *fully* in the kingdom of heaven who is not born of “water and of the Spirit.” Take these words of Jesus in their true meaning and in their true relations, and this passage gives no countenance whatever either to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration or that of baptism for the remission of sins.



## CHAPTER IV.

EXAMINATION OF SCRIPTURE TEXTS (CONTINUED): ACTS  
II. 38; 1 PET. III. 20; ROM. VI. 1-4; TITUS III. 5.

---

ACTS II. 38: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

This is confessedly the stronghold of the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins. No other passage in the New Testament is so frequently quoted and so confidently relied upon to sustain the dogma as this. And it is admitted that there is some show of support for the theory in a cursory view of the text. "Repent," says the apostle, "and be baptized for the remission of sins." This looks as if remission was made to depend on baptism as one of the conditions at least. But we are not to be satisfied with a superficial view of things. Nothing short of absolute truth should be our aim.

That baptism is in some way related to the remission of sins is no doubt true. Let us inquire, then, what that relation is. This is denoted by the preposition "for," which shows the relation between repentance and baptism

on the one hand, and remission of sins on the other. What, then, does “*for* the remission of sins” mean? Some expositors think that “for” here means in consideration of, in consequence of, or it may be on account of. According to this view, we are to be baptized *in consequence* of the remission of sins, or *on account* of that fact. This is hardly a just interpretation, for it is exposed to serious difficulties. Whatever “for” means, it must denote the relation of repentance as well as baptism. And if we should be baptized in consequence of the remission of sins, we should have also to repent in consequence of it. But it will not do to say, “Repent, on account of the remission of your sins.” Repentance necessarily precedes remission, being preparatory to it.

We can perhaps form some idea of the real meaning and force of this little word “for” (Greek, *eis*) in this connection, and the relation that it determines, by making some inquiry into the relation of repentance to the pardon of sins.

Repentance is no doubt for remission in some sense. “Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” This reformatory work must precede remission, of course, and is preparatory to it. But repentance, important

as it is, cannot be said to be the essential condition of salvation. It looks to, contemplates, the remission of sins, but it is altogether a preparatory process, and not something to be done as a condition that shall invariably secure the end, or on account of which pardon is granted. It implies contrition and reformation; but these may exist in complete measure and yet no remission of sins be obtained, for the reason that forgiveness depends entirely on faith in Jesus Christ, trust in him. If it be said that there can be no saving faith without repentance, I reply that that is true; still it is faith, and not repentance, that is accounted to us for righteousness. Repentance is *preparatory*, and in that sense is somewhat conditional because precedent to remission of sins; but it cannot be esteemed a condition of salvation in the sense that trust in Christ is, for then once performed the pardon of sins would inevitably follow.

The preposition which is translated "for" would be much better rendered in this place "unto." This is really the meaning of it. "Be baptized *unto* the remission of sins," and not "for" the remission of sins. The truth of this will be realized in a moment, if we take a parallel passage: "I indeed baptize you *unto*

repentance;" or, if we should translate as above, "*for* repentance." Here we have the same preposition (*eis*) governing the same case, and indeed employed to denote the relation of baptism. In other words, it is used to denote the object or design of baptism as John administered it. Now that is precisely what we are inquiring into. What is it to be baptized "*for*" a thing, or "*unto*" a thing? As it relates to repentance, we are sure that it is not because of repentance already performed that one is said to be baptized unto it, nor in order to the obtaining of repentance, nor in consequence of it; much less was it because baptism *conferred* repentance, or in any way necessarily secured it, that John baptized "*unto*" it. This the rite could never do. And yet John did baptize "*unto* repentance." How, then, did John's baptism relate to repentance? Why, in this: it was the rite, or ceremony, by which the obligation involved in repentance was assumed. Everyone who engaged to do what John preached—that is, to repent—*ratified* the engagement by submitting to baptism at his hands. He is therefore said to have baptized them "*unto* repentance;" that is, he *consecrated* them to that performance. All this seems plain and easy. The meaning of "*unto*" we fully comprehend.

Well, this is precisely the meaning of the preposition in the text under consideration, and that denotes the relation of baptism to the remission of sins. The preposition is the same, though translated differently. When it is said, "Be baptized unto the remission of sins," we are not to understand that it is in consequence of remission already past, nor that it obtains remission, or in anywise secures the pardon of sins on account of its performance; but that it is that ritual performance by which the *obligation* imposed in the covenant of mercy is formally assumed. It is an act of consecration whereby one accepts the offers of mercy. But baptism is not the real consecration of the heart and life necessarily, but the *formal* consecration of one's self to God. It is symbolical of inward purification, and contemplates a new life, and is therefore "unto the remission of sins." That is the thing contemplated when we are baptized, but it is not baptism itself that secures it. That this is true is apparent from the qualifying words, "Be baptized *in the name of Jesus Christ* for remission"—which means, necessarily, faith or trust in that name. To be baptized in the name of one means that it be done *relying* upon that name. Baptism is the formal expression of the trust

that is exercised in the name, but it is not baptism that approves, but *trust*. That this is the correct interpretation of the text let us observe that this same apostle, Peter, who spoke these words, is author of two Epistles, in neither of which is it intimated that baptism is for the remission of sins. He mentioned the word but once in these writings, and then was careful to state that "it is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." If baptism had been as necessary to our salvation as some suppose and argue, the apostle no doubt would have placed the question beyond dispute in these Epistles. He was very explicit in another way, however. Speaking of faith, he says: "Whom having not seen ye, love; in whom, though now ye see him not, *yet believing*, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: *receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*" Here he gives great prominence to faith, the end of which he declares to be the salvation of the soul. Surely if baptism ministered to the salvation of the soul, it was important to say so.

It is a correct rule of interpretation that when the meaning of an author is obscure or at all doubtful in any place, it may be inter-

preted in the light of other utterances of his on the same subject put forth at other times and in other places. Following this rule, let us interpret the expression of Peter on the day of Pentecost, respecting baptism for the remission of sins, by what he himself states on other occasions.

It will be remembered that there arose a question in the Church about the privileges of the Gentiles in the kingdom of God. Whereupon the apostles and elders assembled in conference at Jerusalem "for to consider of this matter." (Acts xv. 6.) At that meeting Peter was present, "and when there had been much disputing, he rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and *put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.*" Peter evidently referred to the conversion of Cornelius and his friends, which took place under his ministry. This event, he says, satisfied him that God dealt with the Gentiles as with the Jews. He gave them the Holy Ghost—by which is meant the witness of

the Spirit: "He bare them witness;" and he purified their hearts also—delivered them from the guilt and condemnation of sin. Now this was done, says the apostle, "*by faith.*" If we turn and read the account reported in the Acts of the Apostles, we shall see that it was indeed "by faith," and that baptism had nothing to do in securing the purification of their hearts or the gift of the Holy Spirit. Their baptism *succeeded* the witness of the Spirit unto them, which of course was given to testify of their acceptance before God. Now let it be observed that "*he put no difference between them and us, purifying their hearts by faith.*" That is, he put no difference between the Gentiles and the Jews, but purified the hearts of all alike. God has but one plan by which to forgive men and to save them. But if he purified the hearts of these Gentiles by faith, and gave them the witness of the Spirit without baptism, and required the Jews on the day of Pentecost, or at any other time, to submit to baptism in order to pardon, then there was a difference. But the apostle says there was no difference. How, then, can we reconcile his language? Why, in this: the expression baptism "for remission of sins" is not to be understood at all as a condition of pardon. Here we see the meaning of



Peter as to the relation of faith to salvation; and in the light of this we should interpret all his utterances on this subject.

I have given considerable space to the discussion of this text, because it is the strong reliance of the doctrine in question. I think I have given the true scriptural meaning of the passage. Of this, however, I shall leave the reader to judge.

It is appropriate just here to inquire into the meaning of that single passage in the Epistle of Peter that mentions baptism—1 Peter iii. 21: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)." None but those who believe strictly in baptismal regeneration can suppose for a moment that the ordinance of baptism can *save* us in any efficient sense. The advocates of the theory that baptism is a condition of pardon merely, reject the idea that it has any saving power or quality. This text, therefore, if taken in the sense usually put upon it, proves too much for the most ardent supporter of the doctrine; for it would prove that baptism actually saves us. This, however, it cannot do; and it was evidently the intention of the apostle to guard against that impression, hence the qualifying words inserted by way of

parenthesis—"not the putting away of the filth of the flesh." Whatever baptism may do, this one thing it cannot do: it cannot put away the filth of the flesh. By "filth of the flesh" we are not to understand such impurities as may soil the surface of the body, and that may be removed by washing. Any one would know that baptism was not intended to put away that, or to serve the purpose of an ordinary bath. "Filth of the flesh" means the sin, the guilt, the corruption of the carnal nature. The works of the flesh, says Paul, are these: "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations," etc. And in 2 Cor. vii. 1 he says, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all *filthiness of the flesh and spirit*," which defines very clearly what filth of the flesh means. Baptism, says Peter, is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh." If it is not, then it can save us from no moral pollution whatever. Yet this is frequently quoted and applied to the support of the doctrine in question, as if it were proof positive; and many careless readers so accept it.

What, then, is the meaning? The text itself declares the real object of the ordinance: "It is the answer of a good conscience toward God."

The meaning of this is not very plain. All acknowledge considerable obscurity here because the word "answer" is of doubtful import. The original word, here translated "answer," ordinarily means an inquiry, an interrogation. In rare instances it means a "profession." It was this, perhaps, that induced the present translation. Taken in this sense, baptism means the *profession* that we make before God. It is the response, the expression of conscience to the demand made upon it in requiring obedience to baptism. If baptism be considered an interrogation, the interrogatory is, "Do you accept Christ as the Saviour?" This embodies all. In it is the formal means by which the conscience makes its response of obedience to God. We may never be able to discern the real benefit accruing to us in obedience to this rite, yet the conscience of every believer readily submits to the demand upon it, because it is a positive commandment. Hence it is the answer, or profession, of a good conscience toward God.

If we compare baptism, which is the anti-type—or, as it is rendered in the text, "like figure"—with the flood which was the type, we can perhaps obtain some more definite idea of the text. It is said that eight souls were saved

by water. These were Noah and his family. This is employed as a figure, or type, to represent the advantage that baptism is to us. As the flood was instrumental in saving Noah and his family, so baptism also saves us. Now in what sense were those eight souls saved by water? It is in this that the likeness must be found. The salvation secured to Noah and his family by the flood is a true type of the way in which baptism saves us. Those eight persons were not saved from the guilt and power of sin by the waters of the deluge. Noah himself had been a preacher of righteousness for many years before the flood came. It was his faith in God's word concerning the flood, uttered to him years and years before their fulfillment, that justified him, and that moved him by fear to the building of an ark to the saving of himself and his house. The ark floated on the water, and those eight persons escaped the general doom. This became the occasion of declaring Noah's faith and of demonstrating his acceptance in the sight of God. Thus, says Paul, "he condemned the world, and became *heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*" (Heb. xi. 7.)

In this sense, baptism may also save us. It is the visible means of expressing our faith,

and our acceptance of Christ, and, being a willing obedience to him, is in a very lively manner the answer of a good conscience toward God. But it has no more power to save from the guilt and power of sin than had the waters of the flood to wash away the sins of the old world.

Rom. vi. 3, 4: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." I have already given a somewhat extended explanation of this scripture in another place. (See page 11.) A few additional remarks, however, are necessary here to show the meaning of "baptized into Jesus Christ," and "into his death."

Very many commentators are of the opinion that water baptism is not alluded to at all in this passage. They think that spiritual baptism is meant, and in proof of it appeal to 1 Cor. xii. 13: "For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body," etc. But waiving all this, let us grant that the word has reference to the Christian ordinance, and thus give the doctrine

of baptism for remission of sins every possible advantage. I think that even then we shall find that it obtains little or no support from this text. And if it fails here, it fails everywhere.

It seems that baptism is mentioned in this connection as the instrument that does certain things for us. What are these things? First, we are baptized into Jesus Christ. Second, we are baptized into his death. Third, we are buried with him by baptism into death. These are strong utterances, and are supposed to afford powerful proof in favor of the extreme view already stated. If the words be taken in the construction put upon them, however, and water baptism be regarded as the efficient instrument in doing all that is here said to be done for us, then it does far more than any one claims for it, except it be a most ultra baptismal regenerationist. Those who hold that the ordinance is a condition of pardon only, the test of our faith, do not claim that it *saves* us, or puts any one into *vital* relation to Christ, or insures to any the saving power and virtue of his death. This they stoutly deny. And yet these words are frequently quoted, and applied without explanation to the support of the theory. Taken, then, in its most literal sense, the

text proves too much, for it says we are baptized *into* Christ. Not considering the meaning and force of certain words and phrases, the careless reader falls very naturally into mistake in attempting to construe the language of the apostle here. The words "into Jesus Christ" and "into his death" are a peculiar form of expression. True they denote the design and purpose of baptism, but to understand the office of baptism we must know the meaning of the words. "*Into* Jesus Christ" is an unfortunate translation, if we accept the meaning of the preposition in its present use. The correct and proper rendering of the preposition (*eis*) is no doubt "unto:" baptized "*unto* Jesus Christ," baptized "*unto* his death." This does not signify at all that any vital relation to Christ, or any spiritual interest in his death, is secure to any by ritual baptism—that is, that we are put *into* him. Baptism was not appointed to do that sort of thing. The apostles were commissioned to baptize people "*unto* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And this expression in Romans means just the doing of that thing—"baptized *unto* Jesus Christ." Baptism is a dedicatory rite, and those who receive it are dedicated or consecrated unto Christ Jesus. Yea, more:

they are consecrated unto his death, and unto newness of life. It means nothing more than that we are formally set apart *unto* God, and unto obedience to him. Also, this consecration implies newness of life; that is the real object. We are just as truly to rise to newness of life as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. But the *formal* act of consecration, which is baptism, cannot by any means secure to us the life of Jesus Christ and the virtue of his death. It is the *real* consecration of the soul and body and life to him that brings this holy alliance. This is effected when the soul trusts him and accepts him as the only Saviour.

The object here is to show that none may continue in sin who have confessed faith in Christ. This some of them seem to have forgotten—if, indeed, they had ever known it. “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized unto his death?” As much as to say that we were thereby obligated to die unto this world and all its carnal interests as truly as he died unto it, that sin might no longer have dominion over us, but that we might live another and a higher and a better life just as truly as he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.



Now if baptism had been the instrument of their salvation from sin, or the condition of their pardon, they would certainly have known that none might continue in sin who had been thus delivered from it. They were reminded that being baptized unto Christ implied newness of life and death to sin, though it did not by any means impart that life or afford deliverance from the thralldom of sin.

But to make it more evident if possible, the whole purpose of our consecration to God is present here as a *life*—a life, too, as real, as genuine as the reviving of Jesus Christ from the dead. If it be a *life*, then, it is secured to us, or rather planted *in us*, by the Holy Spirit, who is the only source of life. “And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins.” “It is the Spirit that quickeneth.” Nothing else can give life. We may be *formally* and solemnly consecrated unto Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection by the ordinance of baptism, but our entering upon a life is after the manner of his resurrection by the glory or power of the Spirit of God. So far, then, from teaching that baptism is the instrument of our deliverance from sin, this text teaches just the opposite. The supreme idea is far above a ritualistic service. It means de-

liverance from sin, and death to sin ever afterward, and newness of life—life inward and outward, and in every way just as real to us as the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord from the dead.

There is one other passage of Scripture that I must examine before I dismiss this part of the subject. It is Titus iii. 5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." This is a notable passage in this controversy. "Washing" is assumed to be water baptism, and the interpretation is that baptism itself is a bath, and that this baptismal washing somehow regenerates us—that we are saved by it. This is a great mistake, and, according to our view, very foreign to the meaning of the verse.

Let us allow that the salvation spoken of is salvation from sin, and means a present and not a future salvation. We must observe, then, that the apostle defines both the *procuring* cause of this salvation and the instrumental or *efficient* cause of it. As to the procuring cause he says: "It is not by works of righteous-

ness which we have done, *but according to his mercy* he saved us." Comment is hardly necessary. It is of *pure* unmerited favor that we are saved. No works of righteousness done by us can in any way procure salvation. It is of mercy, hence cannot be of baptism, which is itself a work of righteousness. But the instrumental or efficient cause of our salvation is supposed to be water baptism. The washing, or bath of regeneration—as it is sometimes called—is said to do this for us. The bath, or laver, as said above, is interpreted to mean the Christian ordinance, and the idea is that we are saved by it. This I do not conceive to be the meaning of the language here at all. It is by no means certain that the word "washing" alludes to baptism in the most distant way. I am pretty sure that it does not. What the apostle means to affirm is that we are saved by *regeneration*—that is, regeneration itself is a washing. Not a basin, nor the act or process of washing such as baptism is, but the *state of being cleansed*—a purification. It is a result, then, accomplished in us; we are washed. Regeneration was a new word in the religious nomenclature. It meant a new creation, a new life. To make the meaning more definite if possible, the apostle employed a double exple-

tive, and called it the “washing of regeneration”—just as if he had said, “He saves us by regenerating us, which regeneration is a washing.” We are not to understand that the washing is one thing and the regeneration is another thing accomplished by it. Regeneration itself, when taken in a figurative sense, is a washing, because it is a cleansing from the guilt and shame of sin. When the renewing of the Holy Ghost is mentioned, about the same thing is meant, but the expression is changed to accommodate it to our sense, and to give strength and emphasis to the meaning. This means the renewing effected, brought about, accomplished in us by the direct influence of the Holy Ghost. The obvious meaning, then, is that we are saved not on account of any works of righteousness of our own put to our credit, but by being regenerated, which regeneration is a washing; and that the efficient instrument, or agent, in our salvation is the Holy Ghost, which being poured out upon us—or, as the expression is, “shed upon us abundantly”—renews the inner nature, washing away all the guilt of former transgressions. Regeneration, then, is effected by the Holy Spirit, whose work is also called a “renewing.” And inasmuch as this gracious influence is compared to a copious

shower which is shed upon us abundantly, the effect is very properly called a washing, or the laver, of purification. Hence we are saved by the washing of regeneration and the-renewing of the Holy Ghost. The sole instrument, or agent, is the Holy Spirit, who alone has power to save.

But admitting (which I do not) that the washing referred to is ritual baptism, even then the theory of baptism for the remission of sins gains no support from this passage, for the doctrine does not claim that baptism is either the procuring or the instrumental cause of salvation. It only claims that it is in some way the *conditional* cause. But this is entirely out of the question, for the text most explicitly states that it is "*not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saves us.*" Which means that so far as the *means of securing* our salvation are concerned, it is of the free, unmerited grace of God. In Ephesians ii. 8, when the apostle says that "by grace are ye saved through faith," lest some one might attach some merit to the mere *act* of believing, he adds, "and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God.*"

I have only to express my surprise that so many have arrayed this text of Scripture in the

defense of the unscriptural doctrine of baptismal regeneration, while the plain meaning and the grammatical construction are evidently against any such interpretation.

## CHAPTER V.

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ONLY.

---

WE might rest satisfied with the results of the inquiry made thus far, having shown that none of the scriptures usually supposed to do so really teach that salvation is contingent upon baptism. But to make assurance doubly sure, I shall now proceed to show that justification, or pardon, or the remission of sins—all of which mean the same thing—is offered on another and entirely different condition: that is, *faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*. If this be true, then the doctrine under discussion cannot be true; for it is not possible that the pardon of sins can depend upon two conditions that are unlike and different in all respects. We should remember that God has but one plan by which he justifies or saves men. He has never had but one plan. From time immemorial the system of redemption has been the same. There have been changes in the ritual of religion, and in the forms of worship, etc., but all the essential principles of religion are eternal. No change has occurred or ever will occur in these. Salvation is the supreme object, and

salvation implies pardon, deliverance from sin, and the conditions on which eternal life is to be obtained. All these are among the essential principles of religion, and are not affected by time or change. God justifies people now just as he did when justification was first offered, and just as he will so long as mercy continues. We may expect no amendment to the plan of salvation. I repeat, then, that the one simple condition on which God has ever been pleased to offer pardon to guilty mortals is faith in him and his Son Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, as expressed in her Ninth Article is: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore that we are *justified by faith only* is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort." This statement of a great doctrine I heartily indorse, because I regard it to be true and in strict accordance with the Holy Scriptures. Luther called it the distinguishing test of a standing or a falling Church. All history proclaims that the Church has prospered and souls have been saved in proportion as the doctrine of justification by faith has been exalted and preached.



A multitude of texts might be arrayed, but need not be, to prove that we are justified by faith only. One plain, emphatic utterance of the Bible is as good as a thousand. And where we have a plain utterance we may not expect it to be contradicted anywhere else. The Scriptures are in accord with themselves. the first revelation of the will of God concerning the terms on which he would justify men is recorded in the book of Genesis; and it was made to Abraham. God revealed to Abraham the *covenant of mercy* which contained the conditions on which all men might obtain his favor and be saved. This the apostle Paul calls the "gospel which was preached unto Abraham." Abraham himself, who received the divine communication, was justified freely according to the provisions of the plan, and was made the representative of the doctrine to all the families of the earth.

In pursuit of the argument, therefore, I shall point out, first, the manner of Abraham's justification; and, secondly, shall show that every other man is to be justified on the same condition that Abraham was. In doing this, I simply adopt the line of argument pursued by the apostle Paul, who was the great champion of the doctrine of justification by faith only.

How, then, was Abraham justified—that is, on what condition? What did he do, if any thing, to obtain the forgiveness of his sins? In Rom. iv. 2, 3, we read: “For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it [his faith] was counted unto him for righteousness.” This is a quotation from Genesis xv. 6, where the transaction of Abraham’s justification is recorded. If the reader will turn and read the account, he will find that God promised a certain thing to Abraham which was against all human possibility. But Abraham’s confidence in God’s willingness and ability to perform it was so great that *on this account* God justified him—that is, imputed his faith to him for righteousness.

In Rom. iv. 18–22, we have a striking description of Abraham’s very exalted trust: “Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations. . . . And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was *strong in faith*, giving glory to God; and being fully per-

suaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform. *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."*

It is very clear, then, that Abraham was justified by faith only. There is nothing else to which his justification can be attributed, for he had done nothing else to secure it. And lest some one might come to attach some merit or value to the circumcision of Abraham, and suppose that it had something to do with his justification, the apostle presents the fact that Abraham's faith was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was justified by it freely, before his circumcision took place. (Rom. iv. 10.) Thus excluding all idea that circumcision had any thing whatever to do with the justification of the patriarch. The argument, then, is conclusive that Abraham was justified by *faith only*; for he had no merit, and did nothing whatever but believe in order to secure his justification, and therefore it was "imputed to him for righteousness."

I am aware that there is in the Epistle of James a statement that seems to be irreconcilable with this. He says (chap. ii. 21-24): "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? . . . . Ye see then how that by works a man

is justified, and not by faith only." This passage is often quoted in proof that a man is not justified by faith only. And there is a seeming conflict between this and the teaching of Paul on the subject; so much so that Luther came well-nigh rejecting the Epistle of James altogether. Other good men, too, have staggered at this utterance. But there is no real conflict between the teaching of these two apostles. James, it must be noted, speaks of the trial of Abraham's faith when he offered his son Isaac on the altar. It is thought that Isaac was not far from twenty or twenty-five years of age at the time. But Paul speaks of the faith of Abraham in God's word—*before Isaac was born, and when he was promised unto him*. Being about a hundred years old, and Sarah being about ninety and without posterity, when God promised them a son, though it was contrary to nature, and a natural impossibility, yet Abraham believed God, "in hope against hope;" and by that faith he was justified—that is, pardoned—for it was "imputed to him for righteousness." Now what took place when he offered Isaac on the altar could not affect, or in any way invalidate, his justification which occurred years before. In the sense of being tried, proved, vindicated, he was justified by

works which were the natural fruits of his faith. In the sense of being pardoned he was justified by faith only. James himself says (chap. ii., verse 23) that “the Scripture *was fulfilled* which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.” These apostles, then, are not at variance. The faith that justifies must be a fruitful faith—one that leads to good works, and to all manner of sacrifices for God. But the blessedness of pardon is not withheld until good works do appear, but is conferred at once on account of the *character of the faith*.

The pardon or justification of Abraham is the one instance that illustrates the plan by which God proposes to justify all men. Every one is to be justified on the same terms and conditions that he was. From that day to this there has been no change. It is by grace through faith that we are saved. In proof of this, I quote Rom. iv. 23, 24, speaking of Abraham’s justification by faith: “*Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus Christ our Lord from the dead.*” Again, it is said in Gal. iii. 6–9: “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. *Know*

*ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham. . . . So then, they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*" These texts are sufficient. They show that the heathen, and in fact all men, are to be justified in the sight of God just as Abraham was, and that this blessing comes upon the whole race by virtue of God's promise to that effect.

The statements of Paul are sufficient, being inspired of God to speak the truth; but in proof of the doctrine he makes an argument in his Epistle to the Galatians that puts the question beyond all shadow of doubt. He says (Gal. iii. 15-18): "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men. Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. [The covenant was in the form of a promise.] He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, *that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if*

*the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise."* To get at the point we must take notice that salvation is offered to the world by promise. God made promise to Abraham that through him all the families of the earth should be blessed. The condition on which he determined to save was *faith only*, and he entered into covenant with Abraham by which he agreed—so to speak—that every one who would accept him by faith should be freely justified on that simple condition. This covenant, with its simple stipulations, was "confirmed before of God in Christ." God himself swore to it by his own great and holy name. Abraham accepted it and was freely pardoned, his faith being "accounted unto him for righteousness." Now the apostle reminded those who were going about to establish their own righteousness, or were seeking salvation by obedience to the law, that it could not be in the very nature of the case, because the whole plan of mercy was a covenant transaction. It is of the very nature of a covenant, though it be but a man's, that if it once be confirmed no man can disannul or add thereto. The will of the original parties must be respected and their wish carried out. Now this was precisely the case with the doctrine in hand. God had promised in

covenant form that salvation should come to the Gentiles through faith. The law therefore, which was enacted four hundred and thirty years afterward, could not disannul it, to make the promise of none effect. There could be no addition to the covenant. The law was not ordained to be a condition of justification, but to be a rule of life. And if the law, thus ordained so many years after, could not affect the covenant of mercy, neither can any other enactment at any time after the confirmation of the covenant do it. It is not possible, by any means, to change or amend the essential features of it. I speak reverently when I say that it was impossible for Jesus Christ himself to make water baptism or any thing else besides faith a condition of justification, inasmuch as it would be to add somewhat to a covenant which God had confirmed before. God cannot deny himself.

It is therefore settled by the Scriptures that we are justified in the sense of pardon freely by grace through faith, as the only condition *necessarily precedent*. This being true, the doctrine that baptism is for the remission of sins is untrue, and contrary to the teaching of the Bible; and those who think that baptism, appointed nearly two thousand years after the



covenant of redemption was confirmed, is now the condition of salvation, are greatly mistaken as to its design.

I revert, then, to the original question, and ask, What is the design of Christian baptism? I answer that it is a ceremonial purification symbolical of spiritual purity. It is also a dedicatory rite by which we are formally consecrated to God, and is the simple means by which we signify our acceptance of the covenant of grace. I beg to refer the reader, however, to Part II. of this book, where this subject is treated fully in connection with the "Subjects of Baptism."



PART SECOND.  
SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.



## CHAPTER I.

THE QUESTION STATED—GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM STATED AND EXPLAINED, AND THE RELATION OF CHILDREN TO IT ESTABLISHED.

---

WHO are proper subjects of baptism? All admit that persons who have come to years of accountability, and do repent of their sins, and have faith in Christ, should be baptized. The Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Church, the Lutheran Church, the Church of England, all branches of the Presbyterian Church, Methodist Episcopal Church, Protestant Episcopal Church—in fact, the whole of Christendom, except the various branches of the Baptist Church, including those familiarly known as Campbellites—believe also that infants are proper subjects of baptism. I shall now devote a few chapters to the investigation of this subject.

In the beginning of this discussion it is important to obtain a clear view of the question at issue. It should be remembered, then, that in the baptism of children the obligation is upon the parent or guardian, and not upon the child. It is not the *duty* of a child to be baptized, it is its *privilege*; and it is the duty

of the parent, or whoever is responsible for that child, to have it done. If this can be kept steadily in view, most, if not all, the difficulties that beset this subject will disappear.

The main argument in favor of infant baptism has generally—in fact, nearly always—been deduced from the relation of children to the Church of God. It is said that when God organized his Church in the world he provided that children should be members of it, and thus entitled them to all the benefits and ordinances of the Church. And as this regulation has never been repealed by divine authority unto this day, infants are still related to the Church, and in consequence are proper subjects of baptism. This argument, greatly elaborated by many writers, when properly defined and understood, is very good, and accords with the Scriptures. But a good deal of explanation is necessary. The word Church is so indefinite that this statement of the argument is open to continual objection. Church sometimes means a “house of worship,” and sometimes a “congregation of people;” and then again it means “the general assembly” of believers. On account of this ambiguity there has been unceasing discussion respecting the perpetuity of the visible Church

from time immemorial. One man uses the word Church in one sense, and another uses it in quite a different sense. I prefer, therefore, in this discussion not to make any argument at all on the relation of children to the Church. Whether the Church be visible or invisible, or whether there has been but one Church, or more than one, does not affect the argument as I am about to state it. I grant that there is a Church which is "the pillar and ground of the truth," and that believers and their children share in its blessings, and that all the world is to come to a knowledge of the truth through its agency.

Say what you may about the Church and its essential unity, whether it be true or not, and the changes that have occurred under successive dispensations, there is this that we all allow: There is but one God, and one religion, and the principles and statutes of this one religion have been the same and will remain the same forever. Variations in forms of worship may be required by time, circumstance, or national distinction, but these do not affect the essential principles of this one spiritual religion. They are as unchangeable as God himself, and as permanent as human nature. This religion which involves a reve-

lation of the will of God respecting the race, and the obligation to love, honor, and worship him, began to be revealed in the form of a *covenant*, or agreement. God made certain great and precious promises, on condition that man would assume and faithfully perform his duty as it might be revealed unto him. In other words, the religion of the Bible is covenant in its character. When an individual comes to God in actual service he enters into solemn covenant with him, and assumes an obligation to love and serve the Almighty *fully*. The consecration must be thorough. It involves all that one has. Himself as to his inner and outward life, his children, and in fact all his possessions, are placed upon the altar of sacrifice. This is one of the essential principles of religion. God does not accept any one after an uncovenanted manner; nor does he accept any but a whole offering. It is upon this fundamental and essential principle of religion itself that we rest the doctrine of infant baptism. It is part of the obligation of every one that enters into covenant with God to *consecrate* his children to God and make them the subjects of careful religious culture. It is, therefore, from the *covenant character* of the Christian religion that we deduce our strong-



est argument in favor of the baptism of children. It shall be our aim, then, to establish the three following propositions:

I. The original covenant made with men required the consecration of children by the application of the sign or token of the covenant to them.

II. This covenant, first made with Abraham, with all its essential requirements, is still in force, and is in substance the covenant of grace, as it is amplified and illustrated to the whole world in Jesus Christ.

III. That baptism has been made by divine authority the sign and seal of this covenant in the place of circumcision, which was the original token of it.

If these three propositions can be sustained by the Scriptures, then the doctrine of infant baptism is true. We ask, then, a candid, careful, and prayerful consideration of the testimonies in favor of these things.

As Christianity is covenant in its character, then, and involves so much, let us look somewhat into the beginning and history of this covenant between God and men, that we may see what is implied in it, or rather what is required of every one who assumes this solemn obligation. The first record in the Bible of a

covenant between God and men involving this idea is in Gen. xii. 1-3: "Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Abraham obeyed God, and forsook his father's house, and when he had gotten into the land that was designated as the place, God appeared to him again and said (Gen. xiii. 14-17): "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered." Abraham received this word and dwelt in the land, but was childless, and began to doubt if God could possibly fulfill his word that he had promised. So, in response to this, God spoke to Abraham again (Gen. xv. 1-5): "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abra-

ham in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed; and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."

When the time drew near when Abram should be blessed with an heir, the subject of this promise, God appeared to him again and revealed unto him the full provisions of that great covenant that respected not Abraham and his seed alone, but that is to culminate in the salvation of all the nations of the earth. The interview is reported in Gen. xvii. 1-13: "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will *make my covenant between me and thee*, and will multi-

ply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face; and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my *covenant*, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; *every man-child among you shall be circumcised*. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; *and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you*. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought

with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant."

In the several passages quoted above there is not a record of so many different covenants, but a succession of interviews between God and Abraham, in which the purpose of God touching the one great covenant was gradually revealed to his faithful servant. Taking all these passages together, we have a complete history of the matter. In the last passage quoted (Gen. xvii. 1-13), the covenant, with its stipulations and terms and conditions, is stated, and the token of it appointed. Whereupon God for his part confirmed it by an oath; swearing by himself, as he could swear by no greater. And he required Abraham to confirm it in an equally solemn manner, which he did. Concerning this important engagement, thus ratified and involving such vast destinies, we remark,

First, it was *duplex* in its character. That is, it was partly secular and temporal, and partly spiritual. The important feature of the covenant was spiritual, and secured to Abraham unnumbered blessings in his own life and in

that of his family, and gave him abundant assurance of a life to come. It is said of him, therefore: "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles; . . . for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Moreover, he was by it to be the honored father of an immense multitude, and should in some way be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Here we see what was contemplated. The real significance of this promise Paul shows in Gal. iii. 16: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to *seeds*, as of many [as if the blessing should be on account of the *multitude* of the posterity]; but as of *one*, And to thy seed [singular], which is Christ." The blessing that should come upon all nations through Abraham is defined to be Christ, who is the Saviour of the world. It was not, then, the multitude of Abraham's posterity, or some great thing that they should do for the nations, that this promise contemplated; but *one* which, says the apostle, is Christ. This was the prominent and specific feature of the covenant, and was spiritual. All other items and feat-

ures were subordinate to this, and, in fact, aids to its accomplishment. Abraham engaged to "walk before God, and be perfect"—that is, to be his willing and obedient servant; just what every one has had to do since who is accepted of him. But where such entire resignation was required ample provision had to be made for the sustenance of Abraham and his posterity; hence the *secular* part of the covenant which endowed Abraham and his posterity with that vast estate of territory bounded only by the horizon; and with many other distinctive benefits. But this estate was temporal, and designed only to serve as the scaffolding to the main feature of the covenant, which contemplates the spiritual welfare of the whole world.

We observe, second, that Abraham was required to assume this covenant for himself and for his children also. He was constituted their representative, and they were to be made parties to this covenant just as one making an agreement that is to be perpetual binds his heirs and assigns forever. Even the stranger that sojourned with him had to submit to these stipulations. The relation of children to the covenant of religion and the obligation that is upon the parent respecting his children are

here clearly defined and imposed by Almighty God. In case of neglect or omission for any cause, the child thus left without covenant relations should be cut off from his people. Not damned necessarily, but deprived of the rich promises of the covenant. It is well for us to remember that this covenant on the part of the parent implies more than the circumcision of a child. It meant the careful and godly training of one's posterity, as God said: *"I know Abraham, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of."*

So important was it that Abraham should consecrate his entire household in sincerity that God put him to the test on this very article of the covenant when he required him to present Isaac as a burnt-offering before him. God tried Abraham to see if he would indeed give him his son as he had promised to do. Abraham was faithful to his vow, and withheld not his only son, though he had been designated as the promised seed. Thus he came to be the "father of the faithful," and an example to all who should come after him.

Third. We remark that this covenant had



its token, or sign, which Abraham received himself, and *was to administer to his seed in their generations while as yet they were but eight days old*, and to the children of his servants, and to the strangers who dwelt with him; thus *committing* them to all the requirements of this covenant. The token of the covenant was circumcision. This was to be a sign not simply of the fact that one was of the seed of Abraham—many aliens and strangers were circumcised—but it was the *sign of the covenant*. It was not merely a mark of national distinction: it signified that the individual receiving it was committed to the great Abrahamic covenant whose requirement was inward and outward purity. Hence says Paul (Rom. ii. 28, 29): “He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; *and circumcision is that of the heart, and the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*” Moreover, it was a *seal*, which secured to every one that was circumcised the riches of the promise, on the condition, not that circumcision had been submitted to alone, but that the *obligation* of the covenant, of which circumcision was the token, would be duly regarded. “For,” says Paul (Rom. ii. 25), “cir-

cumcision verily profiteth, *if thou keep the law*; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision."

Here we see the spirit and import of circumcision—that it was something more than a mere mark of national distinction. It was the sign and seal of the covenant, and witnessed that every one receiving it was not merely an heir to the temporal estate of Abraham, but a child of the promise, and under obligation to "walk before God and be perfect." Circumcision without obedience profiteth nothing.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE PERPETUITY OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

---

WE have seen that the covenant made with Abraham contemplated the peace and happiness of the whole world, and that it was spiritual in its significance, though temporal blessings were also secured to Abraham and his seed by it. We have seen, also, that this covenant embraced children who were compelled, at the age of eight days, to receive the token of it. In the next place, I will endeavor to show that this same covenant, made so long a time ago, has *never been disannulled*, but is still in force, and that whatever of blessing we enjoy through the gospel we inherit according to its provisions and promises. In other words, the gospel is the expansion and fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. As said in the beginning, I offer no argument for infant baptism on the identity of the Church in all ages, because the word Church is too indefinite. Besides, it does not appear to all alike that the *visible* Church has been just the same all along. It is evident, however, that the *constitution* of the Church, so to speak, has ever been the

same, and will so continue to the end of time. If it can be shown, therefore, that this constitution, which is the covenant made with Abraham, in its formation made provision for children, and required every parent to consecrate his children to God, remains unaltered in this respect, it will be established beyond all doubt that infants ought to be baptized: *provided*, further, that it can be proved that baptism is the sign and seal of the covenant. This I think I shall be able to do.

Some think that Jesus Christ came into the world to inaugurate and establish a system of religion entirely new and different from every thing that had gone before; that all the covenants made with the fathers were disannulled, or so fulfilled as to become of no further obligation. This cannot be true. There is but one God, and the principles of righteousness and religion are eternal. What was essential in one age to eternal life is essential in another, and in all ages. Time disturbs nothing but forms and ceremonies. Christ did not make his advent into this world as the founder of a new religion, but as the exponent of the old. When the Jews charged him with this, he replied: "I came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfill." Which meant

that he came to confirm and to establish, not to antagonize. The "law and the prophets" were not types nor shadows. The law was the expression of God's will, the interpretation of the covenant of his mercy, and the prophets were his mouth-piece; he spoke by them. What is said of the law and the prophets, therefore, is true of the one great system that was illustrated and confirmed in the way of a covenant with Abraham. Christ did not come to impair it in any essential feature, but to strengthen, confirm, illustrate, and carry out the promises respecting the happiness of all families of the earth. Hence we read (Rom. xv. 8): "Now I say that Jesus Christ *was a minister of the circumcision* for the truth of God, to *confirm the promises* made unto the fathers." Here the office and mission of our Lord are clearly stated. He was a "minister of the circumcision." Circumcision, we have seen, was the token of the covenant made with Abraham, and was a synonym for it. When we speak of circumcision, then, we mean that covenant. Christ, says the apostle, was a "minister" of this. That means that he was an ambassador, an agent, representing the interests belonging to this covenant. I am aware that some interpret "circumcision" here to mean the Jewish people,

and tell us that Christ was their minister—a Jewish teacher. But this cannot be the case. True, he was a Jew, but his office and ministry were not restricted to the Jews. He is the Saviour of the world. He was a minister of the covenant made with Abraham, sent according to God's promise, and he came, as Paul declares, "for the truth of God," to fulfill what he had promised. He came, after centuries of preparation and delay, to "*confirm the promises given unto the fathers,*" and thus to fulfill God's part of the great covenant, and extend to the whole human family the provisions of the promise.

In further proof of the perpetuity of the covenant made with Abraham, I refer to Gal. iii. 8: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." Here we have the very language of that covenant quoted, which the apostle calls the "gospel," and says that it was "preached beforehand unto Abraham." But the identity of the gospel and the covenant made with Abraham was discovered to be in this, that all are justified alike by faith. Abraham was, and the heathen—and, in fact, all the world—are

justified in this way. It was the justification of the heathen by faith that was meant when it was said to Abraham, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." Language could not make it more definite. If this statement of the apostle is to be credited—and surely no one can doubt it—then the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the great plan of redemption, is none other than the expansion of the Abrahamic covenant. And if this be true, then all the essential features of that covenant are still obligatory.

But there are other scriptures touching this important view. In Acts iii. 25 we read: "Ye are the children of the prophets, *and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham*, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." In this Peter reminds the people of the covenant made with Abraham, quoting the precise language, and calls them the children of it—*i. e.*, heirs. This implies that it was still in force, and that it was the only ground of hope and trust, and through it, and it alone, they might obtain the remission of sins. Surely if Christ had repealed or disannulled it, and laid another ground of hope to the world, this apostle would not so vehemently have insisted on the prom-

ises made to the fathers. The fact that the address was made principally to a congregation of Jews does not affect the truth. Very true, the Jews had enjoyed many distinctive privileges; but the covenant mercies hitherto restricted to that nation are now extended to all the families of the earth.

That the gospel is the expansion and fulfillment—in other words, the continuance—of that system of mercy of which the Jewish people were so long the depositories is further evident from Ephesians ii. 11, 12. Paul, addressing the Gentiles, says: “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” Here we have the former condition of the Gentiles described—that is, before the gospel was preached unto them. They were *uncircumcised*. Circumcision was the token of the covenant of the redemption, and to be uncircumcised meant to be without covenant relations. In fact, the apostle declares them to have been “*strangers*



*to the covenants of promise,*" and "aliens to the commonwealth of Israel"—not belonging to it or sharing in its privileges—and, in fact, were atheists in the world, *being without Christ*. To have Christ and to sustain a vital relation to him is to be in friendly relations to Israel and the commonwealth thereof, and to be in the full enjoyment of the covenants of promise, which shows that Christ is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. Paul, describing the present status of the Gentiles, says: "Ye are no more strangers [to the *covenants of promise*] nor aliens [from the commonwealth of Israel], but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were *far off* are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Made nigh unto what? Not to the blood, for it was in the blood that made them nigh; made nigh unto those things to which they were strangers and aliens in the former times. They were admitted to all the privileges of the circumcision, and were invested with the full franchises of the commonwealth of Israel. Observe, it is the same commonwealth with another people admitted into it. This was not the civil polity of the Jewish nation. That community was henceforth to be done away, having served its purpose as a politico-ecclesiastical body. It was doomed;

and a spiritual community or commonwealth composed of Jews and Gentiles called the "household of God" was to continue in the world. But there was no change of religion. The terms of salvation continued; and there was no more change in the covenant than there would be in the Constitution of a State or commonwealth if another State should be consolidated upon it. Because, therefore, of the retention of all the essential features of the covenant as the constitution of this spiritual kingdom the body is the same, the Gentiles only being admitted as "fellow-citizens with the saints."

Now, I ask if the fundamental law of this great commonwealth had from its first utterance required parents to dedicate their children to God and apply unto them the token of the covenant, would not the same be required still? And if the Gentiles be admitted to citizenship, would they not come under this provision too? Most assuredly, unless it be repealed or an exception be made in their behalf, which was never done. No matter whether the identity of the visible Church has been preserved or not, the covenant—which is the constitution of the Church, and that wherein our obligation is defined—has been perpetu-

ated. This covenant imposed an obligation upon every parent to bring his children into covenant relation to God, and it imposes it still. It is on this feature of the Christian covenant that the doctrine of infant baptism relies for its support.

Enough has been said, I dare say, on the perpetuity of the covenant made with Abraham to establish it beyond doubt; but as much depends on this proposition, I cannot forbear to call attention to one other passage touching the point.

Romans xi. 17-24. "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. . . . For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree; how much more shall these, *which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree?*" In this metaphor the Jews are described as the "*natural branches*" of a stock, and the Gentiles as wild olives "*grafted in among them,*" and made partakers of this stock with them. This parent stock called a good

olive-tree was the peculiar property of the Jews. They were its *natural* branches, and all that had distinguished them from time immemorial had come through it. Some of the branches were broken off and the branches of a wild olive grafted in, but the *original stock* still remained and is to continue. Even the branches that were broken off shall in due course of time be grafted into their own olive-tree again if they abide not in unbelief. Now, what is this stock here called an olive-tree into which the Gentiles are grafted? It cannot mean the *family* of Abraham. The Gentiles were never made partakers of that, nor were any of the Jews ever deprived of their blood relationship. Nor can it mean the Jewish commonwealth, The Gentiles were never consolidated with that government. And as for the religious ritual of the Jews, the apostle declares that to have been abolished in Christ. The stock of which the Gentiles were made partakers was undoubtedly that which had made Israel a peculiar people, which was *not their blood, nor their form of government, nor their style of worship, but the covenant which God made with their fathers*—their religion. This was the root whence sprung all their blessings; and into this gracious system all the peoples of the

world are admitted. So that we have it not only in statement, exhortation, and appeal, but in metaphor too plain to be misunderstood, that the same covenant of promise continues through all the ages.

If it be said that we are now under the provisions of a new covenant, I ask *when, where, and with whom* was it made? and what are its provisions? There is certainly no mention in the Bible of any such transaction. In Hebrews viii., St. Paul alludes to the prophecy of Jeremiah respecting a new covenant to be made with the house of Israel. But this was new as compared only with the Sinaitic covenant, whose place it was to take. The covenant made at Sinai had "ordinances of divine service" (Heb. xiv. 1), "and a worldly sanctuary, and sacrifices," and a great many things which were figures for the time then present. But all these were done away, and the law, or covenant, of spiritual worship substituted for them. This is the covenant that Jeremiah foretold, and that has come to pass. But it took the place of the Sinaitic, and not of the Abrahamic. Besides, children are not excluded even by this new covenant; "for they shall know me, saith the Lord, *from the least of them unto the greatest.*" The truth is, God never

made a covenant with man that did not include his children also.

It is established, therefore, by the authority of the Scriptures, that the covenant made with Abraham is an *everlasting* covenant, and that we of this generation are under its provisions. And if so, then children are to be admitted into its relations.

## CHAPTER III.

### BAPTISM THE SIGN AND SEAL OF THE COVENANT, AND NOT THE DOOR OF THE CHURCH.

---

HAVING established by the Scriptures the continuance of the covenant made with Abraham—which, as we have seen, required that its token be applied to children—there remains but one other thing to be done in order to prove that children ought to be baptized; and that is, to show that *baptism is now the sign and seal of the covenant*. If this can be done, our argument is complete, and the doctrine of infant baptism is true.

The original token of the covenant was circumcision. That, for good reasons, has been done away and another instituted. I was about to say that baptism takes the place of circumcision. In so far as it is the outward, visible means of entering into covenant relations to God, this is true—for on this depends our argument; but I cannot affirm that baptism simply takes the place of circumcision. Baptism evidently implies something that circumcision did not, or else the apostles would have commanded to leave off circumcising and be-

gin baptizing, which they did not, but commanded *all* to be baptized, even though they had been circumcised. Every one was required to assume *voluntarily* the obligation of a new life. This formal token which they had received had lost its significance to them. The spirit and meaning of circumcision were lost in the letter of it. The difference between baptism and circumcision seems to be about this, in which we see sufficient reason for the change: Circumcision could be administered only to males, and it was restricted to the family of Abraham, and to such as would consent to be adopted into that family. Although it was the token of a covenant that contemplated a blessing to all nations, it was in some measure a mark of national distinction. Whether it was originally designed to be such or not, its restriction to one family through so many ages gave it a national significance. As the secular part of the covenant was now fulfilled, having served its purpose, like the scaffolding to a building, it was wise to change the sign of the covenant that all distinctions of sex, nationality, and station in life might disappear in the gospel. Hence it is said that so far as we all stand related to the gospel (Gal. iii. 28), "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is



neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ." These distinctions could never have been abolished and the whole Church put upon an equality if that had remained which more than any thing else had power to perpetuate them—to wit, circumcision. Therefore, it was abolished, and a new and beautiful symbol instituted—one that marks no distinctions of sex or nation. This change of the token of the covenant, however, implied no change in the covenant itself, any more than a change in the manner of witnessing a contract would imply a change in the contract. It was the *token* or *sign* of the covenant that was changed, not the covenant. This was done without violence, for the very best of reasons, as we have seen.

Baptism was instituted, then, by divine authority, as the *sign and seal* of the covenant; and we are under obligation to receive it, and to administer it to our children.

Baptism is not the door into the Church—as some say—except in a remote sense. True enough, Church-membership follows, but the design of baptism is not simply to initiate one into visible connection with the Church. For lack of understanding on this very point, there has been perplexity in many minds about the

relation of children to the Church. I would have you bear in mind that this ordinance *relates to the covenant, and is an act of consecration*; being the outward, formal manner by which one assumes the obligations of the covenant of grace. Baptism is, then, not a mere *rite* or ceremony for joining the Church. Nor was circumcision. It is called—and very properly so—a *sacrament*; because we do thereby signify our agreement to the covenant of mercy, and *pledge ourselves* to a life of faith and obedience. The *sacramental* character of baptism is the point we have in view. Hence, in the ritual for receiving members into the Church, candidates are required to “ratify and confirm the *baptismal covenant*,” which means that they assume this obligation for themselves, their parents having done it for them while they were irresponsible.

The relation of baptism to the covenant is clearly implied in Acts ii. 38: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” Here baptism is associated with the forgiveness of sins. The relation between them is denoted by the preposition *for* (Greek, *eis*). It is difficult to perceive at once the precise meaning and force of this particle. We can understand it more

readily, perhaps, by comparison. Take an instance, which is in Matt. iii. 11: "I indeed baptize you with water *unto* (*eis*) repentance." Here the preposition is the same, and governs the same case. It shows the relation between John's baptism and repentance—"baptize you *unto* repentance." What does this mean? Certainly not that John forced repentance upon the people; nor that he, by baptism, did *confer* repentance upon them. Repentance is an individual work, voluntary with every one. Being baptized could not necessarily cause repentance; and yet they were baptized *unto* it. Why, then, baptize? The answer is easy. John preached repentance. But repentance implies an *obligation*, a duty. Fruits meet for repentance had to be brought forth. Every one that submitted to John's baptism *resolved* to lead a new life, and to receive the Messiah when he should be pointed out. The design of the baptism was to *commit* them to this thing. It was the public, formal manner of assuming an obligation, the *sign and seal* of an engagement. Hence, they were baptized "*unto* repentance," because repentance was the thing contemplated. Now, what John's baptism was to *repentance*, Christian baptism is to the *remission of sins*. It does not necessarily *secure* or *confer*

the remission of sins, nor wash away sins, as some vainly imagine, nor in anywise, on its own account, obtain pardon; but it is the formal manner of accepting Christ. It relates to the remission of sins; and that remission is granted on the condition of *simple trust in Christ*, exercised when the soul accepts the covenant of mercy. There is an *obligation* to be assumed, an agreement to enter into, before the remission of sins can be obtained. It is an obligation of *faith in Christ and obedience to him*. This is the covenant of which baptism is the sign and seal. Baptism contemplates the remission of sins, and hence we are baptized *for* remission, or *unto* remission; that is, looking for and expecting remission of sins through faith in Jesus Christ. Now remission of sins is extended to all men, under the provisions of the covenant made with Abraham. The very heathen, saith the Scriptures, are justified by faith, according to its promises. If baptism, therefore, stands so related to the remission of sins, and is the visible means of entering into covenant relation to God, and if the obligation that we assume in Christ is that prescribed in the covenant made with Abraham, Christ being the promised seed, does it not follow that baptism is the sign and seal of the

covenant? And if it is, it takes the place of circumcision, which was the former token, and should therefore be administered to children.

Another important text that shows the sacramental character of baptism is Rom. vi. 4: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized *unto* (*eis*) Jesus Christ were baptized *unto* (*eis*) his death?" The argument of the apostle is this: The "free gift" which is in Christ is not simply an offset to the loss sustained in Adam, but far more, inasmuch as it provides forgiveness for all the sins of the world. So that where sin abounds—no matter how abundant—grace does much more abound. Some might conclude, therefore, that it would magnify the grace of God to go to an excess in sin, and thus afford *grace* an opportunity. In reply to this St. Paul presents the design and purpose of baptism: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized *unto* (*eis*) Jesus Christ, were baptized *unto* (*eis*) his death?" Baptism, in Paul's mind, meant *consecration unto* Christ, and it contemplates newness of life. The former appetites, with the affections and lusts of the flesh, must be crucified; that as Christ died, so in a mystical sense we must also die with him. Religion means death on the one hand, and life on the other. But this requires not

submission to a ritual performance only, like baptism, but a solemn engagement of heart and purposé, to *put on Christ*, to be conformed to his life and death; and it is the *covenant character* of our faith that we show forth in baptism. Baptism is the *sign* and *seal* of that covenant that brings us into vital connection with Christ. Hence we are said to be baptized *unto* or *into* him. This seems to be sufficient to establish the covenant character of baptism, but there is one other passage of scripture bearing on this subject too important to be omitted (Gal. iii. 27): "For as many of you as have been baptized into [*eis*] Christ have put on Christ." It must not be supposed that baptism operates of its own saving quality to bring any one into vital connection with Christ. As said above, such a thing is impossible. No outward form or service can do this. But baptism points to Christ, and is an act of *consecration* by which one publicly and formally "puts on Christ"—*i. e.*, assumes the likeness and character of him, and engages to keep his commandments. The point I want to make is, *that the vow and covenant assumed by baptism into Christ is the Abrahamic*. Now that this is the case is evident from that utterance of the apostle that immediately follows (Gal. iii. 29):

*“If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”* To be Christ’s—that is, his disciple—is to be the seed of Abraham. Living relation to Christ, secured by faith, makes one a child of Abraham. Every child of Abraham is an heir of his. A disciple of Christ is an heir of Abraham, just as if he had sprung from the loins of that patriarch, and is as much entitled to the inheritance. The apostle says: *“Being children, ye are heirs according to the promise.”* The promise was a *“blessing to all nations.”* This blessing we obtain in Christ, the promised seed. But we inherit according to the terms and conditions prescribed when the promise was given, which was when God made the covenant with Abraham. All who come into the family of Abraham, and partake of the blessing of life in Christ Jesus, must accept the covenant. But we signify our acceptance of Christ by baptism—*“we are baptized into him.”* If being baptized unto Christ, then, makes one an heir of Abraham, as the Scripture says, and as every heir of Abraham must necessarily accept the covenant made with him, does it not follow that baptism is the sign and seal of that covenant quite as truly as circumcision was formerly? And if this be so, then children ought

to be baptized; for the requirement made of every parent under that covenant was that he consecrate his children unto God.

Every one must acknowledge that baptism is the sign of a covenant—*some* covenant. Like circumcision, its significance is not outward; it is not a mere *rite*. What, then, is the obligation imposed by it? If it be said, “A life of faith and obedience to God,” I answer, very true. But this is precisely what Abraham engaged to do; nothing more, nothing less. This we are required also to do. But God enjoined Abraham also to “command his children after him,” and cause them to understand the importance of this same obligation. Circumcision meant nothing more nor less than the *consecration* of children to God and their godly training. It was a sign of inward purity, the cutting off of the lusts of the flesh, and very appropriately indicated the real meaning of the covenant entered into before God—newness of life.

Are Christian people under any obligation to command their children, and teach them the way of the Lord? Certainly not. This duty to train one’s household is the highest possible of all obligations—next to one’s individual salvation. The covenant, therefore, has been



the same through all time, and will so continue. The change of the sign of it does no violence whatever. If it was required that the sign of the covenant be applied to children in the first instance, so is it required still.

We have now finished our first and main argument in favor of infant baptism, in the establishment of three propositions:

I. The original covenant made with man required the consecration of children by the application of the token of the covenant to them.

II. This covenant, first made with Abraham, with all its essential requirements, is still in force, and is in substance the covenant of grace.

III. Baptism was made by divine authority the sign and seal of this covenant in the place of circumcision.

If these three propositions be true, as I think has been abundantly proved, then is the doctrine of the baptism of children according to the word of God.

## CHAPTER IV.

### NEW TESTAMENT AUTHORITY FOR INFANT BAPTISM.

---

WE come now to inquire into the New Testament authority for infant baptism. There is often a great flourish of trumpets by the opponents of the doctrine, because, as they say, there is no *specific* command given in the New Testament to baptize children. As little children are not mentioned anywhere as proper subjects of baptism, the conclusion is hastily drawn that there is indeed no Scripture warrant for the practice. That there was no *specific* command to baptize children given by our Lord or his apostles is true, for the reason that none was needed. Such *specific* mention of children would imply that the consecration of them was a new doctrine, or that some doubt existed as to its truth and correctness, neither of which was true. The relation of children to the covenant and the obligation of parents respecting them were well defined and understood. It was no more necessary, therefore, to give a specific command to baptize children than it was to give one to baptize adults *as such*. Neither sex nor *age*, nor any other

class distinction, is prescribed in the New Testament as qualification for baptism or for the kingdom of heaven. All of every age are embraced who meet the simple conditions in the gospel. Christ did not commission his disciples to go and baptize men or women or adults or children, but to go "preach the gospel to every creature."

Let us suppose that *men* had been specifically mentioned as the subjects of baptism; that Jesus had said, "Go and baptize all nations, and be sure that you baptize the men." Such a command would have excluded the other sex, or somehow rendered their baptism less important. So if a *specific* command had been given to baptize *children*, adults would thereby have been excluded. The class not included in a command is necessarily *excluded* by implication. The very fact that no one class is specified is proof that all are included. The Scriptures very wisely make no distinctions of age or sex in extending the benefits of the gospel; but all, of every age and of every name under heaven, who accept the terms of the gracious covenant, are admitted. The relation of child and parent was so well understood that a specific command respecting the little ones would have been a work of supererogation.

But, while we allow that there is no *specific* command in the New Testament to baptize children, we are far from admitting that there is no scriptural authority for the practice. The sense of the Scriptures may be given in other ways than by a specific command. It is not true, as is often said, that the advocates of infant baptism rely on tradition and Romish superstition to prove their doctrine. We appeal to the New Testament and to the authority given by our Lord to baptize, and think it can be shown by a fair construction of the words of Jesus that the doctrine is true. The commission of Jesus Christ to his apostles, which is the supreme authority for baptizing at all, when properly construed and explained, leaves no doubt as to who are to be baptized. It is as follows (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20): "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded." Here is the commission of the apostles, and their duties are prescribed. We observe that they are not commanded to go and *baptize* all nations, as if baptism was the principal thing; but they are commanded to go and "*teach* all nations, baptizing them." The word in the

original tongue, here translated "teach," is *matheteusate*, which properly means to "disciple," to make or constitute one a disciple. The Revised Version translates it "make disciples of all nations," which is a very correct rendering. This word "teach" must not be confounded with that other word translated "teach" in the following part of the text: "*Teaching* them to observe all things whatsoever," etc. Here the word is *didaskontes*, which means to teach, to give information, to instruct, and is altogether different in its meaning from the former word. Failing to observe this distinction between these two words, both translated "teach" in the Bible, we miss the true meaning of the commission. Discipling and teaching are very different things.

A disciple is a pupil, a scholar; one who is under tutors for instruction. The act, or process, or ceremony, no matter what it may be, by which one is admitted to membership as a pupil and put under the direction and authority of a governor or tutor, constitutes one a disciple. Colleges call it matriculation. To be enrolled as a student of a college or university is to matriculate in it. The education follows, as the word "teaching them to observe" follows in the text. The word "matriculate" is

not the one used in the New Testament to denote this idea, but the sense is the same. The apostles were appointed to go and "make disciples of the nations." They were to preach the gospel to all nations without any distinction, and *commit*, or *consecrate*, to the authority of Jesus Christ all who would consent to be saved; and this consecrating of them was discipling them. It meant to take a pledge of them to do whatsoever Jesus had commanded. This was to matriculate them in the school of Christ. This is what discipling means. The means or process by which this was and is still to be done was baptism. "Disciple all nations, *baptizing* them," or *by* baptizing them. The participle here denotes the means by which the imperative should be obeyed. For example: "Cleanse the garment, washing it;" "cleanse the floor, sweeping it." The participle shows how the cleansing is to be effected. This is precisely the force and meaning of the participle in the commission, "Disciple the nations, *baptizing* them." Baptism is the instrument in the hands of the apostles for making disciples, because it is the means by which all are pledged to the authority of Jesus Christ.

We are not to suppose from this, however, that the apostles had power to make disciples

at heart—that is, convert or regenerate men. By no means: this is the work of the Holy Spirit, who is alone able to renew the soul. Regeneration, however, is the ultimate aim of all effort and of every disciple. Every one constituted such is a learner, and is to be brought sooner or later to a knowledge of salvation in the remission of sins.

Now, the question is this: Who are the subjects of baptism under this commission? Not all nations. The command is not, “Go and baptize all nations.” That would never do. But such are to be baptized as are to be disciplined. Every one who is to be disciplined is to be baptized. But the commission is, “Go ye therefore, and *disciple all nations.*” No matter how sinful or how young or how old, the gospel is to all. *Every one* is to be made a disciple of Christ if possible, and every one thus made is to be baptized. Of course those who have come to years of maturity must consent to become disciples before they can be baptized. This is necessarily implied. But the consent of children is no more necessary than it was in the case of circumcision. The obligation is upon the parent, whose federal relation is recognized in the gospel.

In confirmation of this view of the office of

baptism in the commission, let it be observed that to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," does not mean simply by the authority of that name, or the pronouncing of that name over the candidate. The preposition rendered "in" is *eis*, and is translated in the Revised Version "baptizing them *into* the name." The meaning is baptizing—*consecrating*—them "*unto* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." They are baptized *unto* the Holy Trinity—given, committed, unto him. This is in perfect harmony with the idea of discipling as stated and explained above. So we see that the principal office of the apostles was first to disciple (by baptizing), and then to "teach," instruct, in the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven.

Ought children, then, to be made disciples of Christ, and taught to observe all things whatsoever he commanded? Or, in other words, ought they to be taught, trained from their earliest days, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? If so, they should be made disciples of Christ, which process as necessarily precedes the teaching as matriculation precedes instruction and graduation. And if they should be made disciples of—put into



the school of—Christ, and made the subjects of religious culture, then they should be baptized, for that is the divine order. It is useless to seek to evade the force of this reasoning. As certainly as the words defined above bear the construction that we give them—not only in an etymological sense, but in a theological sense—so surely are children included in the commission of our Lord. They are just as properly the subjects of baptism as anybody in the world, if it be allowed that they are the subjects of religious education, and that the office of Christian baptism is to *commit* all such subjects to the authority and teaching of Jesus Christ. Grant this, and there is no reasoning or sophistry that can refute the doctrine we advocate. I am aware that infants are not *specified* in the commission. Neither are adults. No such distinctions are recognized here. The commission is to the “*nations*,” whatever that word may include. It is fair to infer that every inhabitant of the globe is meant. And if so, children are included. The propriety of it will be seen at once when we remember that no obligation is emphasized beyond the obligation to train and to teach children in the way of the Lord. Nothing is paramount to it. We hold,

therefore, that it is the duty of every parent who presents himself to be constituted a disciple to present his children also, that they may be made disciples of Christ too. It accords with the teaching of Jesus, who said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

It may be said that children can be brought up under religious training without baptism. Certainly they can be; and many are so brought up whose baptism is, through misunderstanding, deferred. But so could adults who seek salvation be dealt with too. We might argue that as baptism has no saving property *per se*, nobody needs it; all can do without it. The fact is, we could very easily persuade ourselves that we could do as well without it as with it. But that is not God's plan. His command is, "Disciple all nations, *baptizing them*;" and then follows "teaching them," etc. Baptism is important, or it would not have been appointed. And it is just as important for children as for grown people; and we are not to go about to mend the order of Providence, but to observe it.

So we think that we have established clearly the proposition in hand by the commission

of Jesus to his apostles, whose fair construction not only allows the baptism of children, but *makes* them as much the subjects as any one.

Let us turn now to the opening sermon preached under this new commission (Acts ii. 38, 39). On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up and, addressing the multitude, said: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, *and to your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This address was to the whole multitude, which perhaps embraced thousands of people. What was said applied to "*every one of them.*" Repentance was enjoined upon such only as had sinned and needed remission. It is by repentance that adults who have transgressed the law are qualified for baptism. But infants need no repentance, having never sinned; it is therefore not required of them. But all need to be baptized. The repentance of an adult sinner puts him simply on an equality in a moral sense with a little child. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

So that if repentant sinners, who, by their repentance, become as little children, are proper subjects of baptism, so are children themselves. They were not required to be baptized *because* they repented, as if no one else was entitled to the ordinance. Repentance is required only where sins have been committed. The reason for both repentance and baptism is given: "*For the promise is unto you, and to your children.*" They were to be baptized because the *promise* was to them. That was the ground of it, as the participle "for" shows. No other reason was necessary, for salvation is free. Peter had only to offer the words of the promise, and call upon them to accept it. It is to you, and to *your children*. Now, I ask, if *they*—the persons directly addressed—were entitled to baptism for the reason that the promise was to *them*, would not their children be entitled to it also? for the promise was to them too. If children were not embraced in these promises of mercy, and entitled to all the benefits, why should Peter have mentioned them so specifically? This very fact shows that he had in mind the promise contained in the covenant which embraced children with their parents.

If it be said that "children" here means

simply posterity, or coming generations, then I reply that it could be to little purpose to tell a convicted people that future generations had been provided for in the gospel. Besides, those "that are afar off" mentioned in his discourse would include them, intending, as the words do, to denote the illimitable fullness of the gospel. No; it meant them and *their children*, for that was the promise. We therefore conclude that children are entitled to the ordinance, being heirs of the promise of which it is the sign.

## CHAPTER V.

### OBJECTIONS STATED AND ANSWERED.

---

I COME now to consider some of the objections commonly urged against the baptism of children; and in doing so, I shall present further and strong testimony in support of the doctrine. It is remarkable to note the utter silence of the Scriptures on the anti-pedobaptist side of this question. Their defense consists almost entirely in picking objections to the arguments offered in favor of the doctrine.

The most plausible and popular objection that is made against the doctrine is, perhaps, that made by way of inference, from Mark xvi. 16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It is insisted that faith, or belief is a prerequisite to baptism; that none but believers are entitled to the ordinance. And as children are incapable of belief they are therefore not proper subjects of baptism.

One theory is that baptism is "for the remission of sins;" a condition of pardon—so to speak—to believing penitents. And as infants have no actual transgressions to be forgiven, they in no way stand in need of baptism.

This theory has the merit of being consistent with itself at least. But it lacks the higher merit of being in harmony with the word of God. The fallacy lies in a mistaken view of the design of baptism, which is assumed to be "for the remission of sins." Baptism is not for the remission of sins in the sense of being a condition of pardon, and was never intended so to be, even to believing penitents. We are justified—that is, pardoned—by faith; and I do not hesitate to say, "*by faith only.*" Abraham believed God, and it (his faith) was "*counted unto him for righteousness.*" And this was done *before he had been circumcised* or had done any thing but believe in order to secure his justification. St. Paul says (Rom. iv. 23, 24): "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; *but for us also*, to whom it shall be imputed, *if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.*" Here we see that justification, or pardon, is by faith only. Abraham was justified by it, and it alone; and the apostle declares that he was an example for us all. As baptism, therefore, does not take away sins, and is in no sense a condition of pardon, it cannot be urged that infants have no need of it, because they need no remission.

Another theory is that while baptism is not in any sense a condition of justification, yet none but believers—those who have personal faith in Christ—are entitled to the ordinance. This sounds very much like affirming the question at issue. The meaning is, none but believers or adults ought to be baptized. But that is the question to be proved, and we want *proof*, not assertion.

“He that believeth and is baptized,” is construed so as to make belief antecedent to baptism. As infants cannot believe, they are of course excluded from the benefits of the institute. This is *the* great argument against the doctrine of infant baptism. It therefore demands more than a passing notice. Observe, then, that this scripture is not intended to define the relation of faith and baptism to each other, but to show the relation of both these things to salvation—final salvation. It does not read, “He that believeth may be baptized;” but, “He that believeth *and is baptized* shall be saved.” No matter which precedes—faith, or baptism—salvation is the thing contemplated. Very true, such as are accountable must have a measure of faith before they are baptized, because without it they would not submit to the ordinance; but there is no reward in the



mere *precedence* of faith. All, who are capable of doing so, must believe. The duty is positive, and none dare neglect it. But it does not follow that because infants cannot give ear, and exercise faith, they must not therefore be baptized. It would also follow that they must necessarily be damned; for it is said that "he that believeth not shall be damned." Faith is as much a prerequisite to salvation as it can possibly be to baptism; and yet little children shall certainly be saved without faith. And if so, why may they not be baptized without it? Faith is no more essential to one than to the other. It is no doubt true that none but believers among adults are proper subjects of baptism, for the very good reason that they are accountable and must consent to the ordinance. But children are not capable of belief or unbelief; hence they are relieved of all responsibility in the matter. The duty is upon the parent, whose faith and acceptance of Christ are federal. He acts for himself, and for his children, as shown in the terms of the covenant of grace. Hence it is said of the jailer (Acts xvi. 34): "He rejoiced, *believing* in God with *all his house*;" and in verse 33: "*And was baptized, he and all his, straightway.*" It is not material to our argument to show that there were infants

in the jailer's household. He was the head of the family, and his federal relation is recognized in the statement concerning his faith, and in the baptism of the entire household on *his responsibility*. Persons capable of doing so, must believe in the gospel in order to receive baptism. This nobody denies. But why is this so? It is not because there is any value or merit in the process or act of believing that obtains baptism or salvation that it is so. Faith is the soul's acceptance of Christ, the means by which it gains a vital relation to him. But it is the *relation* thus obtained, and not the mental work of believing, that entitles to the ordinance of baptism. The same was true of circumcision. Abraham believed God, and "he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith [not righteous faith, but *righteousness* of the faith] which he had, yet being uncircumcised." It is to this end that faith must be put forth. All who by actual transgression have forfeited their interest in the Saviour have to regain their lost estate by repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in view of the *new relation thus secured* are entitled to baptism. But infants need no repentance, never having forfeited their interest in the blood of

Christ. They are already vitally connected with Christ, by virtue of his atonement made for them, and need not the painful process of repentance and faith to restore them to this relation. The truth is, little children sustain the relation of believers to Christ, not by virtue of innate purity, but by virtue of the atonement made for all men. Christ himself calls them *believers*, and presents them as models for the rest of mankind. In Matt. xviii. 6, and Mark ix. 42, speaking of little children, one of whom he held in his arms at the moment, Jesus said: "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones *that believe in me*." And, again (Matt. xviii. 3): "Except ye be converted, *and become as little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Here they are called *believers*. True, they have not personal faith in Christ; but because of their *relation to him*, such as believers have, they are classed with them, and so denominated. The real benefits they have, though they have not faith itself. If believers, then, are proper subjects of baptism irrespective of other conditions, so are children who are by our Lord classified with believers. Their lack of personal trust is no objection, since it is not the mere faith that gives the right to baptism *but*

*the relation that is secured by it.* That infants sustain this blessed relation there can be no doubt, not indeed by virtue of natural descent, but by virtue of the “free gift which has come upon *all men unto justification of life.*” Standing in this relation, and being in consequence heirs of the kingdom, they are entitled to recognition, and ought, by all means, to be kept under the tender mercies of the covenant of grace. If preference must be shown, it should be given to those who have never forfeited their right by actual transgression. Adults are not admitted to baptism until they are converted (at least from unbelief) and “*become as little children.*” Why should the little ones themselves be rejected? It is this child character, and child relation to God, after all, that is the necessary thing; and not until adults get back to the humility and trustfulness of little children are they thought to be worthy of baptism.

Let us suppose that an individual twenty-one years of age could be commended as Jesus commended little children, and have it said of him, “Except ye be converted, and become as this man, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” I ask, would such a one be thought to be a fit subject for baptism? I dare say no

Church calling itself Christian would reject him. But this is precisely what Jesus said of little children. Why, then, should a mere difference in years be made a qualification? We conclude, therefore, that if believers are entitled to be baptized, so are infants, who are, to all intents and purposes, believers.

It is curious to see the number of petty objections that have been urged against the baptism of children. Mere quibbles, that would not be thought of in connection with scarcely any other proposition, have been magnified into an importance almost equal to the word of God, in connection with this. The truth is, while the opponents of infant baptism have all the while demanded a "thus saith the Lord" for the practice, they themselves have been able to offer no such positive proof against the doctrine, but have relied mainly, and almost entirely, on finding objections to it. A few more of the objections commonly urged shall now be noticed.

It is affirmed that infants cannot understand the nature and design of the ordinance, and being incapable of assuming its obligations, ought not, therefore, to be baptized.

I have repeatedly stated, in the course of this discussion, that the obligation is upon the par-

ent, who is responsible for his children until they come to years of accountability. It is already in proof that the very character of the Christian covenant requires this. This being true, it is not at all necessary that infants should understand or comprehend the nature and design of baptism in order to receive it. There are many things to be done for them whose immediate value and meaning they do not at all understand. If parents will only be faithful to their vows, their children will in due time show their appreciation of this early culture by choosing the good instead of the evil.

Very true, salvation is individual in its relations, and is a matter of one's own choice. It is for this reason that the Scriptures enjoin the most careful training of children, so that when they come to years they may most certainly *choose that which is good*. It is to secure this choice on their part that such fidelity to their interest is required.

But it is sometimes said: "If they die in infancy without baptism they shall be saved; and, therefore, it is not at all necessary to baptize them." Certainly, all who die in infancy unbaptized will be saved; but that is no reason why they should not be baptized. It is not the design of the ordinance to *save*, as though

it were an extreme unction. It can neither deliver from sins here nor from the wrath to come. Those dying in infancy shall certainly be saved without it. But we must act in respect to baptism as we do in other things; that is, on the presumption that the child will live. And while it may be saved, in case of early death, being unbaptized, yet if it grows up without it, and without its covenant advantages, salvation is by no means so certain. It is to *this life* that baptism is appointed, and not to the life to come. And those that live and grow up in this world are the ones that need it, and not those that die in infancy. Parents sometimes feel unhappy if any of their children die and are not baptized. Well, our consciences ought to be quick on this subject, and we should feel reproach where there has been neglect; but the *surviving* children should be the subjects of our most constant care and concern.

“O well,” says one, “I believe in the religious training of children as firmly as any one but this can be done without baptizing them.” Certainly, it *can* be done, and I rejoice to think that it is often done by conscientious parents who are not Pedobaptists. They carry out the *design* of the ordinance, though the ordi-

nance itself is not obeyed. But that is not the plan of the Bible, which requires that every one under the covenant should receive the sign and seal of it. Grown persons could be instructed in righteousness, and admitted, too, to membership in the Church without baptism, for that matter, if we would persistently set it aside. But the question is not what *can* be done, but what ought to be done, under the teaching of the Scriptures. Abraham could, perhaps, have trained his posterity according to his vows without applying the token of the covenant to them. They could not understand circumcision, and could possibly have been saved without it too. And yet he was strictly required to circumcise every male child at the age of eight days. The best reason in the world that could appear to Abraham was God's command to do it, and that is precisely the reason for baptizing any one, adults as well as children. Had it not been wise, God would never have enjoined it; and we are not to go about to amend God's ways, but to keep them.

But what good can a few drops of water sprinkled upon a little child do for it? Just as much as a great deal. A flood could do no more. And it is of as much service to an infant as to an adult. The use of water is sym-



bolical, and indicates purity—purity of heart and of life. The real value, however, is not derived from the water applied in baptism which can never wash away sins, but from the *covenant*, or *obligation*, assumed by it, which contemplates the real purity therein symbolized. The same was true of circumcision. “Circumcision verily profiteth, *if thou keep the law*; otherwise thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.” Baptism is also profitable if the vow of faith and obedience be truly regarded; but without this it is simply a waste of water.

Some parents profess great solicitude lest their children might become dissatisfied in after life if they be baptized in infancy. This principle, if carried out, would leave a child without a name, without education, without a calling, and without any religion at all. Parents should remember that religion is not a mere matter of preference; that form of it being the best that may best suit the natural tastes and social surroundings. Must all be permitted to grow up without religious bias, and every one be left to choose whatsoever may seem good in his own eyes? Such false conservatism finds no favor in the Bible. Our duty to coming generations requires no such compromise. On the contrary, God makes it

the *duty* of every parent to train his children in the fear of the Lord, and this duty none *dare* forget or lay aside. What may be the preferences of a child in any matter of moral obligation are not to be considered, but all those things that are judged to be for the best are to be lovingly and faithfully taught. There is no great danger of dissatisfaction if the proper care is bestowed. There is very great danger, not only of dissatisfaction, but of utter ruin, in case of neglect or indifference.

I know that people sometimes fall under the influence of those who seek to disparage their baptism, and they frequently become bewildered about the mode and design of their baptism, and are unhappy for a time. But this is the *result of not being instructed properly in those things*, and it shows the necessity for early religious education. Parents should teach their children not only how to pray and worship, but the *doctrines of religion*. The evidences in favor of the mode, subjects, and design of baptism, according to our teaching, are very conclusive, and we need not fear to risk them with our children when they are properly explained.

But let us suppose that baptism be delayed

through fear of interfering with the choice of a child when it gets to be accountable. May not dissatisfaction arise on this very account too? It is possible that children, when they grow up, may be strong believers in infant baptism, and may not be immersionists either. There would then be regret that they were not baptized in infancy. Such instances have occurred, and may occur again. Children *may* be dissatisfied, no matter what is done for them; but that which is for their good must be done, regard it as they may. Their tastes, by nature, are wild and vicious, and the object of religious culture is to secure the heart against evil tastes. If parents would only think of it, it is a reproach to them for their children, when grown, to appear at the altars of the Church to be invested with the very rudiments of the faith.

But it is said "the baptism of children brings an immense multitude of unregenerate people into the Church." I ask how? The answer is: "All children are unconverted, unregenerate, and it is wrong to admit them to membership in the Church." This is a very specious objection, and weighs heavily in the minds of many. But let us note that this objection is founded on the supposition that bap-

tism is appointed to *induct people into the Church*. I stated in the outset that this is not true, except in a remote sense. I now repeat that the primary object of baptism is *not to initiate persons to membership in the visible Church*. Church-membership *may follow or it may not*. In the case of infants it does not. In a sort of general way they may be said to be in the Church, because they are the wards of it, and are to receive the care and nurture of the Church; but they are not in any strict legal sense members of the Church. They are not numbered in the statistics, nor are they dealt with after the manner of members in full fellowship, until they of their own election assume the vows of Church-membership. The objection, therefore, is not well founded. But allowing that children by their baptism obtain some relation to the visible Church of Christ, the objection is still not good. It is affirmed that unregenerate persons are thereby made members of the Church. This is a broad assumption that children are unregenerate and without moral fitness to be in the Church. This is an open question, and it is by no means certain that they are without this moral qualification. I shall not discuss the moral state of infants here. I will remark, however, that whatever the

moral state of infants may be *by virtue of natural descent*, they certainly share in the benefits of the atonement in common with all mankind. Jesus said: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; *for of such is the kingdom of God*. Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." It is not material whether the "kingdom of God" here means the heavenly state or the Church in this world. It must mean one or the other. In either case the argument is the same. If it means the heavenly state, then it is apparent that they are qualified for that, and dying will certainly be saved. If, therefore, their moral fitness is such as to insure them a place in that kingdom, surely it will not impair the purity of the Church here on earth to give them a little place in it. And if the "kingdom of God" means the Church on earth, then the objection is utterly swept away, for it said, "*Of such is the kingdom of God.*"

I have now given what seems to me to be good and sufficient reasons for our faith and practice. I have tried to deal fairly in all attempts to state and answer objections to the doctrine. I have not uttered, nor felt like uttering, one single fiery sentence. And I have

this to say in conclusion: *There is not a single objection that can be alleged against the baptism of children that does not stand with equal force against their salvation.*

**PART THIRD.**  
**MODE OF BAPTISM.**





## CHAPTER I.

THE QUESTION STATED ACCORDING TO THE VIEWS OF  
LEADING IMMERSIONISTS — THE “DEFINITE ACT”  
THEORY MOST INDEFINITE.

---

IN every controversy it is all-important that the question at issue be clearly stated and well understood. For lack of this, controversies are prolonged. Where the line of difference is distinctly drawn, however, and kept steadily in view, the settlement is easy if the mind will only consent to the preponderance of testimony.

There is great need of close definition in the discussion of the mode of baptism. Many suppose that the Church has disputed for centuries about the mere mode or manner of administering an ordinance; that the difference has been altogether about a form of service. This is a great mistake. Some, indeed, may have rested in this superficial view of the subject, but all who understand the matter know that the difference is not so much one of mode or manner as it is about the substance and nature of the Christian ordinance itself. Exclusive immersionists hold that the word bap-

tism is one that denotes action, *specific* action, and specific action only. Every thing except the action employed is adventitious and accidental. The action, therefore, though it should include a variety of other things, is alone what constitutes baptism. The result of the action, whether it be a wetting, a dyeing, a washing, a submergence, or something else, has nothing whatever to do with the meaning of the word. These are simply accompaniments or consequences, and not baptism, nor any part of it. The entire validity is in the *act*, according to this theory.

That we are correct in this statement of the immersion view, we submit the teaching of some of the most learned and prominent writers of that school.

Says the Rev. Alexander Campbell, in his "Christian System," page 55: "There are three things to be considered in baptism: 1. The *action* to be done. . . . Jesus commanded a certain character to be the subject of a *certain action* for a specific purpose." Again, in his debate with Mr. Rice, the same author says (page 55): "*Baptizo*—the Greek word for baptize—indicates a *specific action*, and consequently can have but one meaning. For if a person or thing can be immersed in water, oil, milk,

honey, sand, earth, debt, etc., it is a word indicating *specific action, and specific action only*" (italics mine). On page 84 of same debate, Mr. Campbell says: "The word *baptizo* has no more reference to water than it has to oil, or sand, or any thing else; it has reference to *action only*, and consequently can have but one meaning, which is most obvious, if the lexicons can be taken as authority. I again say there is neither water nor washing in the word *baptizo*." Mr. Campbell is good authority on this subject. His views are held in high esteem by the entire immersion world. But to corroborate this statement of the doctrine, I also present the teaching of some of the most learned and prominent Baptist writers on this subject.

Dr. Alexander Carson says: "My position is that it [*baptizo*] always signifies to dip, *never expressing any thing but mode*." (Page 55.)

Dr. R. Fuller, in his treatise on this subject, gave as a caption to his book, "*The Act of Baptism*." This is sufficient to express in a single sentence the entire teaching of the work. Baptism means action.

Prof. M. P. Jewett says: "*Baptizo*, in the whole history of the Greek language, has but *one meaning*. It signifies to dip or immerse,

and never has any other meaning." (Page 13.) Again, he says: "In baptism we are commanded to *perform the act* represented by the word *baptizo*." The reader will see that this accords strictly with the definition given by Dr. Campbell.

Dr. J. J. Conant, a very learned Baptist author, and a member of the American Committee of the late Revision of the Old Testament, thus expresses his view: "The Greek word *baptizo* expresses nothing more than *the act of immersion*. The *act* is performed on the assenting believer, and this distinguishes it from all other acts of life." In his large work on this subject Dr. Conant very ably discusses the *action* of baptism, and leaves no doubt about his being in full accord with the immersion theory.

Quotations from other writers might be given, but it is useless to multiply them. These are sufficient to set forth the prevailing opinion of exclusive immersionists, and give a correct idea of the question at issue.

According to this theory Jesus commanded all men to submit to a certain definite action called baptism, the validity of which lies in the specific character of the act. If this be correct, it is nonsense to talk about the *mode*

of baptism, as if baptism was one thing and the mode of administering it quite another thing. Under this theory baptism itself consists in nothing but mode. Any washing or purification, or other attending circumstance, has nothing to do with it beyond a mere coincident or sequence. Should the baptizing element be poured or sprinkled upon the object, it is not baptism, no matter what the quantity may be, because it is not the action denoted by the word. Furthermore, the thing baptized must itself be the immediate subject of the action. A complete submergence, if it be brought about by pouring, is not baptism according to the immersion theory, because it is not the state of being submerged that constitutes baptism, but the process or action that secures it. Let me illustrate: Suppose an object be placed in a basin and water be poured in upon it until it is entirely enveloped. This may be an immersion, but according to the immersion theory it is not a baptism, for the reason that the object immersed was not the immediate subject of the act. The *state* of envelopment is not baptism; the object itself must be taken and put into the baptizing element, and thus made the immediate subject of the act, in order that the demands of this word

be met. Hence, the positive assertion all along that baptism *cannot* by any possibility be performed by pouring. It is apparent at once that all idea of washing, cleansing, purification, and such like, are foreign to the subject, and wholly out of the question.

This may be an unexpected presentation of the subject to many, but it is precisely the view held and taught by the large body of people who practice exclusive immersion. I have not only stated the doctrine correctly, but have stated it so plainly that every one may understand. I now ask that in the discussion of this subject this definition be kept steadily in mind; and I am sure that before we have gone half through the examination of the testimony in hand the utter untenableness of the theory will appear.

If the word *baptizo*, which is the Greek word for baptize denotes specific action, and specific action only, I inquire, *What is that one specific action that constitutes baptism, and that we must all submit to?* Surely if the word denotes nothing but one well-defined, specific act, it will be an easy matter to answer this question. Any immersionist—even an unlearned one—ought to be able to do it in a moment of time. In fact, one would think from the high

pretensions of exclusive immersionists that nothing was easier than an answer to this question; that reference to any Greek lexicon would settle the matter at once. But the task is not so easy after all; for, strange to say, in the face of the emphatic assertion made over and over again that baptism denotes *specific action only*, no great advocate of the theory has yet been able to state, on good authority, the one specific act that constitutes baptism. Men have tried, but have just as often failed. In the attempt to settle this question, immersionists are themselves not agreed. Some say that *baptizo* means to dip, that it is the one specific act; others say that it means "immerse;" and others still that it means something else. The writer heard a very clever Baptist preacher once undertake to define *baptizo* beyond all doubt. His position was that it "invariably means to dip, or immerse, or plunge, or something of that sort." This is a very fair sample of the efforts that have been made to point out some definite act as expressive of the meaning of *baptizo*. I ask why this confusion, this difference, this want of unanimity on a subject so clearly and so definitely taught?

Mr. Campbell, in his great debate with Mr. Rice, says, page 109: "They all [the lexicons],

without one single exception, give ‘dip,’ ‘immerse,’ ‘sink,’ or ‘plunge’ synonymously expressive of the true, proper, and primary signification of baptize.” When we read Mr. Campbell’s positive assertion, based, as he declared, on the testimony of all Greek literature, that the word *baptizo* denotes *specific action only*, we were impatient to get on to the place where he would tell what that one specific act might be. In the sentence just quoted, we have that wonderful disclosure, which is in fact just about as we expected; for, instead of presenting us with *one* specific act as the proper definition of the word baptize, he presents us with *four*—viz., dip, immerse, sink, plunge—and then says that these “denote the true, proper, and *primary* signification of the word.” Now, I submit that this is decidedly unfair; for if through all Greek literature this word preserves the one idea of specific action only, and means nothing else, why not tell, without any circumlocution, what that act is? Why give four words that denote as many different actions, and some of them no specific action at all? Mr. Campbell says it means “dip, immerse, sink, or plunge.” These words differ in meaning very widely. To dip does not mean to plunge. The action implied is



very different; while dip and immerse are very far apart in signification. To say that a word denotes *one specific act*, and then give four or five different words expressive of as many actions to define it, is simply to say nothing that is sensible. But Mr. Campbell no doubt did the best he could. It is true he says the words "dip," "immerse," etc., are *synonymously* expressive of the true, proper, and primary signification of the word *baptizo*. But every one knows that the words are *not* synonymous—that is, they do not express the same idea; for if they do, then why should more than one of them be employed in the same sentence and at the same time. This is no place for tautology. We want words that express the real meaning. If baptism denotes some one specific act, the world should be informed without multiplicity of words what that act is. To come forth and say that it means this, that, or the other, will not answer. When we consider the exclusive teaching of immersionists, our demand that some one word be given as expressive of the definite action of baptism is altogether reasonable.

The vagueness of Mr. Campbell's definition is further apparent from what follows. The words "dip," "immerse," etc., he says, are syn-

onymously expressive of the *true*, *proper*, and *primary* signification of baptize. Why use so many words to describe a thing that has but one definite meaning throughout all literature? Mr. Campbell's own language implies that some other meaning attaches to the word. His definition is, however, the *proper* and *primary* one. If immersionists would leave off all circumlocution, and state in a single word what definite act is meant by baptism, it would greatly oblige the world, and do more than any other thing to settle this controversy.

But it may be said that one word has by common consent been universally accepted by immersionists as the true and only definition of the word *baptizo*, and that is the word "immerse." The leaders of the discussion will not affirm this, though it has by constant appeal and usage and general consent been universally adopted by the immersion Churches as the one word expressive of their doctrine. Let us examine them, and see how this will do.

The American Bible Union, under whose auspices the New Testament was revised and another version put forth, undertook to substitute the word "immerse" for "baptize" in all places where it occurs in the New Testa-

ment. This, it was affirmed, is the one word that expresses the true idea of baptism. All other words fall short. Notwithstanding the time and scholarship that were devoted to that work, the attempt was too great. It was found that the word immerse could not be substituted for the word baptize in all places, though it might forcibly be made to do so in many. In Mark x. 38, 39, for example, they translate: "Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink, or to *endure* the immersion which I *endure*? And they said to him, We are able. Jesus said to them, Ye shall indeed drink the cup that I drink, and *endure* the 'immersion' which I *endure*." Here we have the word *baptizo* six times, and four times out of the six it is translated *endure*—only twice by immerse. The truth is, it was too absurd to say that "I have an immersion to be immersed with." Such an utterance would be nonsense. The utter impossibility of carrying out the purpose to supplant our very appropriate word baptize was apparent; hence, for once at least, immerse was abandoned, and the word *endure* employed. I do not know that the lexicons mention *endure* as a definition of *baptizo* at all. The use of it, however, even in a single instance, is fatal to the "specific act" theory; for *endure*

denotes state or condition, and not specific act at all. Endurance is not action.

Another instance in the same revision equally palpable occurs in Luke xii. 50: "But I have an immersion to *undergo*; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Here *baptizo* is translated *undergo*. I suppose it was selected under the stress because it sounds somewhat like immersion. Again it was too bad to say, "I have an immersion to be immersed with," and so something like an approach to it had to be made. But it must be observed that *undergo* is a very different thing from "*go under*." We may indeed undergo an immersion—that is, submit to it—but we cannot "*go under*" an immersion. By the way, we see here again a clear abandonment of the "definite act" theory; for the word *undergo* does not imply any definite action, but simply state or condition. This failure is in keeping with the like failure of Dr. Campbell to select one word as definitive of the one specific meaning of *baptizo*. All the great leaders together have never been able to decide what word expresses the one definite act contained in baptize. If immerse has been by common consent adopted, it has been done in the face of difficulties, as we have seen, and in spite of the highest au-

thority, as we shall see. There is this strange inconsistency in the adoption of the word *immerse* to express the definite act of baptism, which immersionists seem generally to have overlooked: *that the word immerse itself is not a word that denotes definite action.* To immerse expresses no definite act. It denotes very definitely the state or condition of complete envelopment; but the word itself does not even imply how the envelopment may be brought about. Let an immersion be secured in any way—by pouring, dipping, plunging—and the demand of the word is fully met. As said above, the word “immersion” denotes state or condition—that is, a state of *intusposition*, and not definite action. Some action may necessarily be implied in immersion, but the action is altogether secondary to the meaning of the word, and it may be either one thing or another. The action is lost in the idea of envelopment. This all must see at once. Why, then, should a word be selected to express some definite act which really expresses no definite act? Here lies a great inconsistency, and it has done much to prolong the controversy on this subject. If the advocates of the immersion theory would adopt a word that does really denote specific action, the ut-

ter untenableness of their doctrine would soon appear. On the contrary, if immersion is to be retained as the word most suitable to express their idea of baptism, then the "one definite act" theory should, for the sake of consistency and truth, be at once abandoned. This, I dare say, would have been done long ago did not the abandonment of the definite act theory mean necessarily the abandonment of the entire immersion theory and the practice under it; for such would be a tacit acknowledgment that baptism might possibly be performed in more ways than one.

I dare say the great body of exclusive immersionists hold that immersion alone is baptism, without stopping to consider for a moment what act is implied in it, if any. To their minds the act is of very little consequence; it is the *immersion*, the complete submergence in water, that they regard without any care or opinion as to how it is brought about. There are many, I say, that hold this view. Indeed, some of the leading controversialists on that side of the question have been forced to admit that baptism *might be performed by pouring, provided enough was poured to completely envelop the subject*. But this is a complete surrender of the doctrine of the immersion Churches. It leaves

---

the question of mode entirely out of view, and resolves the discussion into one of a mere quantity of water, and nothing else. But this will never do. If baptism does not denote specific action only, then there need be no further discussion of the mode of baptism, inasmuch as the word is not one of mode, but of something else.

## CHAPTER II.

### TESTIMONY OF THE LEXICONS.

---

It is difficult to get people to understand just the difference in this discussion over the mode of baptism. It is no doubt generally believed that those who practice baptism by affusion entertain the same idea respecting pouring or sprinkling that immersionists do respecting the act of immersion, as they call it. But such is not the case. We do not affirm that the *act* of pouring or the *act* of sprinkling is baptism. On the contrary, we stoutly deny that baptism consists in any specific act. Our doctrine is that "*baptism may be administered by pouring or by sprinkling*;" and that it may be understood that we seek no advantage in the statement of the question, I will add that while it may be administered by pouring or by sprinkling, it may be done *so as to preclude all idea of complete submergence*. If this proposition can be sustained, then the immersion theory cannot be true; and the practice of baptizing by pouring and by sprinkling will be vindicated.



Observe, I do not affirm that baptism *must* necessarily be performed by pouring or sprinkling. I simply mean to affirm that it may be done that way, no great importance being attached to the manner of doing it. The *action*—by which we mean the mode—is altogether secondary; it is the *result* that is of prime importance. Baptism is not an action; it is the result of one, or of a variety of actions. The New Testament idea of baptism is a washing, a cleansing, a purification, without reference to the specific manner of its performance. The action most convenient to secure the end meets the requirement of the word *baptizo*, whether it be dip, immerse, plunge, sink, pour, or something else. Hence, when we allow that immersion is baptism, we do it not because of any significance or value that we attach to the *action* in the matter, but because there is an application of water with the proper design. The increased quantity requisite to effect an immersion we do not consider invalidates the baptism. But we do not allow, and truth will not compel us, that immersion, effected either in this way or that, is the *only* baptism. It is sufficient to our purpose, and all that is needed to vindicate our faith and practice, to show that baptism *may* be performed by pouring or

by sprinkling. This I hope to be able to do beyond a peradventure.

But before stating the argument in favor of our proposition, I will notice some of the reasons ordinarily employed by exclusive immersionists in favor of their doctrine. And first, we shall examine the lexicons. These are appealed to with great confidence, and we frequently hear it said—much to the dismay of some on our side of the question—that not one single lexicographer of any standing or repute gives “pour” or “sprinkle” as a proper definition of the Greek word *baptizo*.

Before looking at a single definition, let us pause and inquire what the issue is. It is affirmed that *baptizo* denotes *definite action*, that it means *one thing only*, and is so specific that there need be no mistake. Keep this in mind. Now let us examine the lexicons, and see if this be true.

*Donnegan*, who is good authority, defines *baptizo*: To immerse repeatedly into a liquid; to submerge; to soak thoroughly; to saturate. Hence to drench with wine.

*Met*: To confound totally.

*Pickering*, whose lexicon is generally pronounced to be one of the best, thus defines it: *Baptizo*: To dip, immerse, submerge, plunge,

sink. In the New Testament: To wash, perform ablution, to cleanse; baptize; also to *overwhelm one with any thing*; to be prodigal toward one.

*Edward Robinson*, in his Lexicon of the New Testament, defines *baptizo*: To dip in; to sink; to immerse. In the New Testament: To wash; to lave; to cleanse by washing.

I might present the testimony of numerous other lexicographers, but it is unnecessary. They all accord in the main with what is here given. From these we find that the Greek word *baptizo*, instead of meaning *one thing*, and *one thing only*, as is so often affirmed, means several things; and instead of denoting definite action, as immersionists most confidently affirm, it is most indefinite. The first of these witnesses says that the word means to *submerge*; to *soak thoroughly*; to *saturate*. These are by no means synonymous. Each contains its own idea; and the impression made is that *baptizo* sometimes means one thing and sometimes another. The lexicographer does his best to present the various senses in which he finds the word used by the best writers of the language; and we discover that no single English word is equal to the emergency. It takes several. Hence, *baptizo* means not *one thing only*, but several things.

Furthermore, these witnesses are equally against the idea of "definite action." They say "dip, immerse, plunge, sink, soak, *overwhelm, wash, purify,*" etc. Now one or two of these words may denote specific action, say "dip," and "plunge," and perhaps overwhelm, but each word expresses a very different action from the others; while the remaining words in the definition express no definite action at all, but simply state or condition. The entire category is employed, not because of some definite action that they denote, but because of the many senses in which this famous word is used.

If one definite action is to be acknowledged as baptism alone, which, I inquire, among the many given in definition of the word, shall it be? This ought certainly to be settled by the advocates of exclusive immersion, before the demand is made on all the rest of the world to accept their view. The force of this is often evaded by the remark that the *first* or primary meaning should invariably be accepted. I reply that the dictionaries differ somewhat as to the primary meaning of the word. Besides, if they were agreed, we are by no means bound to accept the primary meaning of a word simply because it is such, for many of the most

frequent and important words in the New Testament have put off their primary signification and come to be used in a widely different sense. This is especially true with respect to words which are now used to denote spiritual and religious things that originally contained no such idea. Instances need not be given. The bare statement of the fact is enough.

A very specious argument in favor of immersion is sometimes made on what they are pleased to call the *general* meaning of the word. A correct rule of interpretation is "that the general meaning of a word should always be accepted unless the circumstances forbid its use, or the mind of the writer be known to be against it." It is *assumed*, of course, in the argument that the general or ordinary meaning of the word *baptizo* is immerse, and therefore it should be accepted to the exclusion of all others. This argument, quite plausible indeed, has been employed with considerable weight in favor of the doctrine of immersion. To many minds it seems to be the very thing, and I doubt not that for this very reason, more than any other, the great majority of exclusive immersionists so heartily cling to their faith and practice. It is the general meaning, they say, and therefore it cannot be wrong. At any rate,

it is on the safe side. But this argument, powerful as it is with the unlearned and the masses, is an utter abandonment of the very foundation principle of the immersion theory, which is that baptism must and can denote but *one thing*, and that that one thing is a *specific action*. Now to affirm such as this, and then turn and insist on the *general* meaning of the word, is out of the question. It is simply a desertion of one's doctrine; for a *general* meaning implies other and perhaps various meanings; at any rate, it implies some special meaning. If not, why talk about a general meaning? There can be no general meaning, in the strict sense, to a word which has but one specific meaning throughout all literature. If *baptizo* means *one thing*, say so; but don't turn, and then in the next breath make an argument in favor of its *general* meaning. The argument itself, instead of being in support of the immersion theory, is against it.

We admit that *baptizo* sometimes means immerse—in fact, it very generally means it in classic Greek; but we deny that this definition should therefore be recognized as the only one, or that it should be accepted at all when the word is used to denote the Christian ordinance. According to the standard rule of interpreta-

tion given above, it is lawful that the ordinary and obvious meaning of a word be sometimes laid aside for one that is specific and direct. For if the *circumstances* be against the common use, then, instead of the general meaning, we are to accept that which is more apparent. Now this is precisely what is true of the Greek word *baptizo*; for, admitting immersion to be its general or primary meaning in classic use, it will be found on inquiry that the word has taken on quite a different meaning in the New Testament. When applied to the Christian institute, it neither denotes definite action nor complete submergence, but a simple washing, or ceremonial purification. All the circumstances connected with this religious use of the word are against the prime idea of complete submergence or interposition. And if any thing else is needed, the minds of the New Testament writers can be shown to be wholly at variance from the immersion doctrine, which shall be done in due time.

But it may be said that while the lexicons do not define the word *baptizo* to be any one specific act to the exclusion of all others, yet they all agree that the idea of submergence or complete envelopment is involved, no matter what action be implied. I again reply that this

is a complete surrender of the *modal* idea of baptism. If, therefore, the mode, or *manner*, of administering the rite be surrendered there is nothing left to be discussed. Immersionists, having thus abandoned their faith, should abandon their practice, or, at least, be more charitable and conservative toward those who are pleased to baptize in another way. Under this admission, too, the truth of our proposition must be acknowledged; for if baptism means nothing but the simple state of immersion, without regard to the way in which it is brought about, then certainly baptism *could* be done by pouring, inasmuch as an immersion could be effected in that way. This, I trust, I shall be able to show; and to show, too, that baptism does not necessarily mean complete submergence. There are instances where nothing but complete submergence could be meant, but there are others where the word baptize is used to denote nothing beyond a partial or even a *slight wetting*.

It is often affirmed, and with great assurance, that not a single lexicon, of the many that have been written, gives "pour," or "sprinkle," as a proper definition of the word *baptizo*. The air of triumph with which this declaration is made has caused great anxiety to many who



have doubted the high claims of exclusive immersionists. Occasionally a timid disciple becomes dissatisfied with having been "christened," and seeks relief for the conscience under the "liquid wave." The best relief, however, would be to admit more light to the understanding. But I do not say this by way of reproach.

In answer, then, to the above, I want to say, and be understood in making the concession, that so far as my knowledge goes the statement that no well-authenticated lexicon defined *baptizo* to pour or to sprinkle is correct. Some of the lexicons, whose definitions are given in Latin, may, by a free and liberal translation, be made to favor "pour" and "sprinkle;" but the instances are rare, and the translation doubtful. I am aware that a good many learned men on my side of the question think otherwise. Old and rusty volumes, some of them written in strange tongues, have been ransacked to find pour or sprinkle as definitive of the meaning of this word, but with little success. This failure, however, does not affect the truth of the doctrine of those who believe in baptism by affusion. We have never affirmed, and do not now affirm, that *baptizo* means to "pour" or to "sprinkle." No one who understands the

nature of the controversy will affirm it, because it is not our teaching. The truth is, the word *does not mean to pour*, nor does it mean to sprinkle. All the authorities are against it, and that, too, for the very reason *that both these words denote specific action, and specific action only*. I know of no words that denote definite action more clearly than do pour and sprinkle. If, therefore, *baptizo* meant to pour or to sprinkle, it would be a word denoting specific action as immersionists have affirmed of it, and their theory would be correct, only the action would be different from what it is claimed to be. But inasmuch as this Greek word is generic and not specific, it cannot be defined by any such word as "pour" or "sprinkle."

There is a singular inconsistency to be observed on both sides of this controversy, out of which has sprung, no doubt, much of the heat and passion of the discussion. Exclusive immersionists hold that baptism means "definite action only," and then employ a word (immerse) to denote that definite action which is not specific at all. On the other hand, those who believe in baptism by affusion hold that baptism does not mean definite action, but simple state or condition—*result*—and then define it by words that do not mean state or con-

dition, but definite action. If these two sides could, somehow, manage to exchange terms, it would help matters mightily. At any rate, both should seek to be consistent; and if they would only do so, there would soon come an end to what has long seemed to be an interminable controversy.

The trouble has been that many of our controversialists, fired with the spirit of debate, have affirmed too much on either side. If the Baptists have been unable to point out a word denoting some specific action as the proper definition of baptism, so have we been unable to establish the claim that the word means to "pour," or to "sprinkle." And we have failed in the attempt for the very reasons that the Baptists have failed, viz.: the word does not denote specific action, and therefore does not mean to pour. But while this is true, baptism means something *that may be accomplished either by pouring or by sprinkling*. It means to wash, to soak, to wet, to cleanse, to purify, and often to immerse. But any and all of these may be done by pouring. The difference, however, between the process and the *result* must always be kept in view. *Baptizo* looks to results, and not to processes. Only keep this in mind, and there need be no anxiety or trouble

because the lexicons do not give "pour" and "sprinkle" as among the definitions of this word.

Some of the favorite lexicographers, such as Robinson, Wahl, Greenfield, and others, make special mention that the New Testament use of the word *baptizo* is "*wash*," or "*purify*." Judging from the circumstances under which it is used, we conclude that this is really the scriptural meaning of the word. No matter what was its original and primitive meaning, this word, under the law of development, soon came in its religious use to denote a washing or ceremonial purification, conveying the idea of cleanliness. In proof of this, I cite Luke xi. 38: "And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that he had not first washed [*ebaptisthe*] before dinner." Here the word is properly translated *washed*. The kind of washing that Jesus omitted, and that exposed him to the censure of the Pharisee, may be seen by consulting Mark vii. 3: "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they *wash their hands* oft [*nipsontai*], eat not, holding the traditions of the elders." I suppose no one will deny that it was the disregard by our Lord of this custom of washing before dinner that caused the Pharisee to marvel. It was not intended to

cleanse the hands literally, but was a ceremonial purification observed by all the Jews, under the tradition of the elders. The mode or manner of the performance is not in point now. I simply call attention to the fact that that which Luke styles a baptism Mark describes as nothing more than the "*washing of the hands.*" That they both allude to the same custom is evident. Here, then, we have proof positive that in one instance, at least, the word *baptizo* is used in the sense of *wash*, without reference to the action by which it is done.

The American members of the late revision, in their appendix to the Revised Version, render Luke xii. 38: "*Bathed* himself." Why they preferred this rendering I cannot imagine, unless it was a sort of compromise with some immersion members of the committee. The word no doubt will admit of this translation sometimes, but it certainly will not in this instance, for it was not the custom of the Pharisees and all the Jews to "*bathe* themselves" before eating. They had their baths, no doubt, for the sake of cleanliness and comfort, but this custom of washing before meals was one of ceremonial purification. It was a washing of the hands, that the tradition of the elders might not be violated. And then in verse

fourth, Mark himself calls this baptism: "And when they come from the market, except they *baptize* they eat not." This was nothing different from the washing mentioned in the preceding verse, but the same thing; and it is called a baptism.

Take another instance to show that the New Testament idea of baptism is *purification* (John iii. 25): "Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about *purifying*." The matter of controversy here alluded to is stated in chapter iv. 1: "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John," etc. The Pharisees sought to vex John's disciples, by reminding them that Jesus had baptized more disciples than their Master. And this practice of baptizing by John and the disciples of Jesus is called *purifying*, as it is said "there arose a question about *purifying*," which was about baptizing. Is it not clear, therefore, that the word is used in the New Testament in the sense of purification? But this could not be true, if the meaning was one of definite action only.

Of the best lexical authority, then, we may say this is the sum:

1. The word *baptizo* does not denote *one thing*

*only*, inasmuch as all the lexicons give it several meanings.

2. It does not denote "definite action," for then it could, of course, mean but one thing. Its demand may be met in one way or in many ways.

3. As it does not denote definite action, it does not mean to pour nor to sprinkle, which words are most definite in their signification.

4. The word primarily denotes immersion; that is, a state of submergence, or complete envelopment, *without specific reference to the mode or manner by which it is brought about.*

5. Under the law of natural development it has come to mean something different from immersion, such as wash, cleanse, purify, which may be accomplished in any way most convenient and easy, the idea of mode being left out of the question. This is especially true with respect to the religious use of the word.

I say the preceding is the sum of the lexical authority on this subject, hence the truth of our proposition that "baptism may be performed by pouring or by sprinkling."

## CHAPTER III.

### INSTANCES OF BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT— JOHN'S BAPTISM—BAPTISM OF JESUS.

---

HAVING examined the testimony of the lexicons as to the meaning of the word *baptizo*, I shall next give attention to the passages in the New Testament supposed to favor the idea of immersion. One of the strongest, and which is regarded by immersionists as entirely conclusive, is that which relates to John's baptism. This is the first instance of the use of the word in the New Testament; and while it is not the same in design as baptism under the authority of Christ, yet the mode in which either was administered is good authority in determining the meaning of the word *baptizo*.

Matthew iii. 5, 6: "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him *in Jordan*, confessing their sins." Or, as Mark reports it, chapter i. 5: "And were all baptized of him *in the river of Jordan*." This, I admit, is to an ordinary reader very strong testimony in favor of the supposition that John's bap-



tism was by immersion; and therefore it deserves the more diligent inquiry.

Allow me to remark in passing that the conception that John the Baptist took the people down into the river of Jordan, and put them entirely under the water when he baptized them, is greatly aided by the example of modern practice. To those situated in life as many people are now, being told beforehand that this is the meaning of the words, and unable themselves to form a correct judgment of the full force and meaning of the language of the text, it seems very evident that they were all immersed; while to others not familiar with the custom of immersing persons in this way, and relying on the sense of the narrative as it is in the original tongue, no such idea would occur.

There are only three things spoken of John's baptism:

1. The design of it. "Unto repentance."
2. The element employed. "I indeed baptize you *with water*"—mentioned in contradistinction to the Holy Spirit with which Jesus should baptize.
3. The *places where* he baptized. These were "at the river of Jordan;" or, as Saint John more definitely states, at "*Bethabara be-*

yond the Jordan," and at "Enon near to Salim."

Not a word or a syllable is said in any place in the New Testament about the mode or manner in which John did baptize. The proof that he baptized in this way or that, except so far as the meaning of the word *baptizo* itself determines the matter, is wholly inferential. The only reason that one has for supposing that John practiced immersion is the statement that "they were baptized of him *in the Jordan*." This is regarded by some, however, as quite conclusive.

The whole argument depends on the meaning of the small particle "*in*"—"in the river of Jordan." This is the rendering of the Greek particle *en*. It is assumed—and the current translation favors the assumption—that this preposition means *in*, in the sense of into; that John in baptizing put the people *into* the water. If the object of the historian had been to describe the manner of John's baptism, the preposition might possibly be made to bear this construction, though in composition the preposition *eis* would no doubt have been employed. But this was not the purpose of the sacred writer, the only object being to give some account of the *place* where John did baptize.

The preposition *en*, therefore, is appropriately used, for it denotes, primarily, *place*—rest in a place; and, as Robinson says, “is spoken of every thing which is conceived as being, remaining, *taking place*, within some definite space or limits.” Hence, according to the English idiom, it is more properly translated *at*, when used with direct reference to place. Or, if it be rendered *in*, it should be understood in the sense of *at*. *In* such a place—that is, at that place. Now, if it had been said that all the people were baptized *at the river of Jordan*, the exact truth would have been expressed, and no impression made that they were actually taken and put one by one into the water.

The same preposition—*en*—is used with reference to Bethabara and Enon: “*en Bethabara*” and “*en Enon*,” which means simply in or at those places. When it is said that John was baptizing “*en Bethabara beyond Jordan*,” no idea whatever of the mode of his baptism is conveyed. The mind receives no such impression, the idea of place alone being conveyed. The same is true of Enon near to Salim, *where* John was baptizing. But when the very same form of expression is employed with reference to the Jordan, and with the

same intention of designating the place where John baptized, the sentence is construed into a *prima facie* evidence that John did immerse the people in the river.

It is said, John i. 28: "These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, *where John was baptizing.*" This was a small village situated on the banks of the river Jordan, and beyond from the land of Palestine. It is altogether probable that Matthew, in speaking of the baptism of the multitudes at the Jordan, had reference to what took place at Bethabara. That town was *at* the river Jordan—or on it, as might be said—and corresponds exactly with the truth of his statement. Besides, the general statement seems to indicate this as the place where John did the principal part of his baptizing. He says: "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and *all Judea*, and *all the* region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan." If these multitudes were not baptized at Bethabara, as we have supposed, but at some other place, then it is difficult to reconcile the statement that John baptized in that village with the facts in the case; for there would, it seems, be nobody left to be baptized there. The conclusion is pretty evident, therefore, that Matthew refers to the

work and ministry of John at that place. At any rate, the clear intention is to designate the place where this occurred, and not the manner of the occurrence.

This Bethabara is, no doubt, the very place where Jesus was baptized. On one occasion John's disciples said to him (John iii. 26): "Rabbi, he that was with thee *beyond Jordan*, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth," etc. John, as every one will remember, bore witness, or record, to Christ at the time of his baptism, as he himself said: "I know him not, but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said to me, Upon whom thou seest the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he; . . . *and I saw and bare record.*" This token of the Messiahship of Jesus appeared to John at the time he baptized him; and he saw the sign and bore the witness. This must have taken place *beyond* the Jordan; for we are informed that he was with John there, and that John bore witness to him there. The only public, official witness of John to Christ that we have any record of was given at the time that Jesus was baptized, when the heavens opened and the Spirit came down upon him. Then John cried, and said, "This is he." This testimony

of John to Christ, given beyond the Jordan, must have been at Bethabara, for there John was baptizing. This further confirms the belief that the multitudes mentioned by Matthew were also baptized at Bethabara beyond the Jordan.

Great stress is laid on the statement that "Jesus, when he was baptized, *went up straightway out of the water.*" The expression "out of" would imply that Jesus had been *in* the water, which of course is interpreted to mean entire immersion. If he really went down *into* the water—or, rather, had been put into it by John—then it would be altogether proper to say that he "came up out" of it. But we have no evidence beyond what is implied in the statement that he came up "out of the water" that Jesus was ever *in* the water. And this inference is very doubtful. The Revised Version gives a far more correct translation of the sentence, which is: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway *from* the water;" which does not imply necessarily that he was ever *in* the water, but that he was at the brink of the stream. The correctness of the rendering of the Revised Version, I reckon, will not be called in question, being fully attested by the meaning of the preposition

and the circumstances attending the case. And even if it be allowed that Jesus "came out" of the water, it must be admitted that his ascent from it *was no part of his baptism*, for this took place after he was baptized. What specific act John performed in behalf of Jesus, therefore, is still a question of doubt, and must be determined by the meaning of the word baptize.

It may be considered as certain, however, that Jesus himself was baptized after the same manner that John baptized the multitudes. And the fact that it was done at the Jordan, or where there was abundance of water, is not to be construed into the idea that all were immersed. The immense numbers that flocked to John's ministry from all parts of the country and from the towns is quite sufficient to account for his resorting to a river's brink to administer the ordinance unto them. An impassioned orator such as John was, in any town or district, without a church or a synagogue, or even without a lodging, crowded by multitudes eager to submit to his demands and be baptized, would do, in all likelihood, just as John did—resort to the river's brink, both as a matter of convenience and haste. No matter after what manner his baptism was to be

administered, whether by total immersion, copious affusion, or by aspersion, the easiest and most natural thing under the circumstances was for John to do precisely what he did—resort to the only abundant supply of water at hand that was free of charge.

In connection with this we must consider the utter impracticability of immersing such multitudes as John baptized. People seldom stop to consider what this involves. However plausible a thing may seem, yet if it be unreasonable or wholly impracticable, assent should be withheld. It is a very easy and a very nice thing to take a few persons already provided with changes of raiment and resort with them to a convenient stream or a well-tempered baptistry at the appointed time and immerse them. But where no such conveniences exist, and no previous notice has been given, and thousands are to be baptized by one individual alone, it becomes a grave matter. The fact is, it appears not only impracticable, but impossible that John should have taken the people up one at a time and put them into the river Jordan. The circumstances are all against such a supposition.

1. The prevailing idea of baptism in the Jewish mind was unfavorable to it. According to



the best evidence, they knew nothing of baptism as a religious rite by immersion. They had their baths for cleanliness and as a *preparation* for religious service, but the idea of a total immersion for the sake of the *totality* of it, or for any other reason, never existed among them. It was always a bath, a washing, performed not with the idea of being covered by the water, but with the single view of purification. Their lustrations, or religious purifications, called baptisms, were invariably performed by pouring or by sprinkling, as I shall abundantly show in the course of this argument. Take one instance. Hebrews ix. 18, 19: "Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, *and sprinkled both the book and all the people.*" Moses caused the law of the covenant to be read in the hearing of all the people. When they gave their assent to it, and engaged to do the things written in the book—that is, assumed the covenant—he took the blood, etc., and *sprinkled both the book and all the people.* This was simply *confirmatory* of the engagement. The blood sprinkled on

the book pledged the Almighty to the performance of his part of the covenant, and likewise the sprinkling of the people *committed them formally* to the performance of what they had engaged to do. True, this is not called a baptism here, but it was the dedicatory rite at the time, and meant the sealing of an obligation which is precisely the office of baptism. All such ceremonies were called, under the Jewish economy, baptisms (Heb. ix. 10), and were invariably performed by pouring or sprinkling. John's baptism was another religious purification, with the like of which they all must have been familiar. He urged the people to repent and make ready to receive the Messiah. As many as engaged to do so were *consecrated* to the performance of that duty. Hence, the form and manner of sealing the engagement must have been simply such as they were accustomed to in their religious uses. It is to be presumed, then, that no foreign or strange mode would be employed by John when he came to baptize.

2. It must be remembered, too, that this baptizing was done under circumstances entirely inconvenient for immersing the people. It was in the open air, by a river, and on multitudes beyond all precedent, including both

sexes without discrimination, who came from towns and cities and country, many of them from a distance, drawn by the fiery exhortation of this ascetic preacher. It is not to be presumed that they were supplied with changes of raiment necessary to an immersion in water, and it is repugnant to all ideas of propriety to suppose for a moment that they were put into the water naked, or without suitable provision for dry clothes.

3. And then again we must consider the possibilities in the case. It seems hardly possible that John could, single-handed and alone, have performed the wonderful task of immersing such numbers in the time allotted. The precise time occupied by John's public ministry is doubtful. Some suppose it to have been not more than six months. It is pretty certain that it did not exceed nine months. The number said to have been baptized by John could not have been immersed by him one by one in that time. It is said that *all* Jerusalem, and *all* Judea, and *all the region* round about the Jordan, were baptized by him. This includes a great many. Jerusalem itself was a very large city, while the land of Judea—which here means Palestine—was crowded with population; and then *all* the region round

about the Jordan beyond from Palestine is included also. To take the words literally, and count the entire population mentioned, will give a tremendous multitude. The exact statistics are not necessary. To approximate the truth is sufficient. Says Josephus in his "Wars," Book II., Ch. xiv., Sec. 3: "While Cestius Gallus was president of the province of Syria nobody durst so much as send an embassy to him against Florus; but when he was come to Jerusalem upon the approach of the feast of unleavened bread, the people came about him *not fewer than three millions*; these besought him to commiserate the calamities of their nation, and cried out upon Florus as the bane of their nation." These three millions of course did not include all the population of Palestine at the time; they were only, we shall say, a considerable part. From this, however, we can form some estimate of the numbers that lived there. John, it is said, baptized *all* Jerusalem and *all* Judea, including scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. If the words be taken literally, many millions must be included. Let us suppose, however, that he baptized only one million—which is a low estimate—and that his ministry extended through nine months, which would be *two*

*hundred and seventy days.* To accomplish this herculean task, then, it would require that John should have immersed more than *three thousand and seven hundred* daily through the entire course of his ministry. Besides, he must have stood in the water waist deep through all this time. John's health and physical strength will not admit of the supposition. I repeat, then, that it seems hardly within the range of possibility that John's baptism was an immersion. So that, taking all the circumstances into the account, the presumption is that John baptized either by pouring or by sprinkling.

I have dwelt thus long on this instance because it is relied on more than almost any other in the New Testament to prove the doctrine. What we ask is a calm consideration of the whole testimony, and we have no fear for the truth of our proposition.

## CHAPTER IV.

BAPTISM OF THE EUNUCH—RED SEA BAPTISM—BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST—BAPTISM NOT A BURIAL.

---

ACTS viii. 36-38: "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? . . . And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

The baptism of the eunuch by Philip is thought to be entirely conclusive in favor of immersion. To many minds there seems to be no doubt whatever that this man was put entirely under the water. This simple narrative has done as much or more to prejudice the minds of ordinary readers in favor of the practice of immersion than all the learned talk about *bapto* and *baptizo*. "They went down both into the water." That is clear. And if they went down into the water, the object must have been the immersion of the eunuch; for, otherwise, why should they have gone down into it?

There are several things to be considered,

however, before a correct judgment can be formed of this case. Let us not jump to conclusions hastily. Losing sight of the current interpretation of the text, let us take an impartial view of the facts and circumstances in the case.

In the first place, when it said "they went down both into the water," it must not be inferred that the descent was necessarily *into* the water. It must be remembered that Philip had, a little while before, *gone up into* the chariot, and was sitting with the eunuch, and riding along the public highway, when—suddenly, it seems—they came "unto a certain water." By going *down*, then, nothing more can be meant than that they went down or descended from the place where they were sitting in the chariot to the water. This does not necessarily imply that they went *into* the water at all. They simply went *unto* it. The preposition (*eis*) may be legitimately construed "*to*" or "*unto*" as well as "*into*." In fact, when it denotes motion toward a place, as in this instance, its proper rendering is *unto*. So that the very language in its proper meaning conveys the idea that they went down *unto* the water, and not *into* it. It was just as necessary for them to go down from the chariot to the water that

the eunuch might be baptized one way as another. If it was to be administered by pouring or sprinkling, they would be obliged to descend to the water. And then not only the convenience both of Philip and the eunuch required it, but the respect and reverence due the occasion required that they should alight and go down from the place where they were sitting to attend to such a solemn duty. Their descent to the water, therefore, contributes but a very slight presumption in favor of immersion; in fact, none at all.

No geography that we know of gives any account of a stream in the region between Jerusalem and Gaza sufficiently large to immerse a man in. Philip was directed to go down to a place which was called a "desert." This was an uninhabited country; but if it had been watered by any such stream as immersionists would have us believe, it would likely have been not a sterile region, but one of the most fruitful regions. There was water, but it must have been either a well, such as they use in that country, or a small stream that issued from a spring or small fountain.

And then again, the baptism of the eunuch on that day was a very sudden and unexpected thing; so that it is not at all probable that



he and Philip were provided with changes of raiment for such a business as a total immersion; and they certainly would not have stripped naked on the public highway. Such a procedure as that would be repugnant to the proprieties of true religion.

Moreover, this eunuch had been "to Jerusalem for to worship," which leads us to suppose that he was a devout man, and familiar with the customs and ritual of the Jews. He was himself perhaps an Israelite that lived in a foreign country, having charge of the treasures of the Queen of Ethiopia. A Gentile and a heathen would not likely have gone to Jerusalem for to worship. His idea of baptism, therefore, must have been that which was prevalent among the Israelites, for he manifested no surprise at the requirement that he should be baptized, but proposed baptism himself on their first approach to water: "See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" As soon as the conditions were explained to him, he gave his assent at once, and descended with Philip to the water. But the Jewish baptisms were not immersions, but were invariably performed by pouring or by sprinkling.

And then it must be constantly borne in

mind that the “going into the water,” and the “coming up out of it”—allowing that such a thing occurred—did not constitute any part of the baptism of the eunuch. If they went into the water at all, the descent was no part of the baptism; but after that was done, then it is said “he baptized him.” Now, the question is, What did Philip do to the eunuch? What *act* did he perform in his behalf? Did he put him under the water, or did he do something else? The record is, “He baptized him.” Immersionists assume that he completely submerged the eunuch; but it is mere assumption. That is the question in dispute, and that needs to be proved. It will not do simply to presume or to *assume* that he did so and so; we want plain, positive proof of the matter. The only evidence in the case is the meaning of the word *baptizo*—“he baptized him.” The circumstances attending the baptism of the eunuch do not determine the mode of his baptism; for, as has been said, their descent to the water and ascent from it, being no part of the baptism, cannot determine just whether the eunuch was immersed or whether Philip poured or sprinkled the water upon him. It is as legitimate to assume that he baptized him by pouring or by sprinkling as

it is to assume that he immersed him. The "specific act" in the case cannot be determined by the narration of the circumstances. The circumstances taken together, however, afford a strong presumption against immersion. If going into the water was the baptism, or any part of it, then they were both baptized; for "both Philip and the eunuch went in." And not only so, but in this event the eunuch baptized himself by going in. Immersionists themselves being judges, the eunuch was only *partially* immersed *by Philip*. Philip simply completed what the candidate had carried forward considerably. Call this quibbling if you please; but it is necessary to show the utter inconsistency of the doctrine that baptism denotes "definite action," and that no one is baptized until he is made the entire subject of this "definite act." \_\_\_\_\_

First Corinthians x. 1, 2: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."

It is remarkable to see the ingenuity with which every allusion to baptism is converted

into an undoubted case of immersion. If facts are not at hand, fancies are employed, and with many seem to serve just as valuable a purpose. In this way a most ingenious argument is made on a rare construction of the passage quoted above. This is supposed to be a clear case of immersion. The water congealed into solid walls on the sides, and the cloud stretched across above, the whole forming a sort of tunnel through which the people passed, is constituted one vast baptistry where they were all immersed. Their immersion consisted, of course, in being completely surrounded—enveloped as it were—by the water on the sides and the cloud overhead. This is very fine imagery; but what we want is *fact*, not fancy.

No one would ever infer from the original narrative in Exodus that there was any baptism of the children of Israel at the Red Sea at all. Moses does not mention it. The facts are reported in full; but nothing that took place on that occasion is called by him a baptism. Paul, speaking, a long time afterward, however, of these things, says, "They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." And, as said above, an ingenious eye discerns at once that they were all immersed in

the sea. Unfortunately for this splendid conception, the facts are against it. There is little, if any, proof that the walls of water on the sides of the passage through the sea were high enough to justify this figure, or that any such tunnel as has been imagined was ever formed. There were *six hundred thousand* men, besides women and children, and also their cattle, that had to pass over. The whole number of people is estimated at about *three millions*. These had to cross in a single night the distance of twelve miles, which is supposed to be the width of the sea at that place. Now, a passage wide enough to admit of this must have been very much wider than an ordinary lane or street. They could not march in a column of two or four abreast. The passage is supposed to have been several miles wide.

The cloud spoken of was that which was to the Israelites a "pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day." And it is not at all certain that they were *under* the cloud at the same time that they were "in the sea." It is said that the cloud "*stood behind* them, and it *came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel*, . . . so that the one came not near the other all night."

The Israelites were indeed *under* the cloud, for it towered above them and illuminated the whole passage through the sea; but it certainly did not settle across the passage from wall to wall like a canopy, and shut them all under. On the contrary, the cloud is said to have "*stood behind them*"—that is, in the rear of their column. And yet, being in the heavens above them, they were all "under the cloud." This scheme to secure an immersion is therefore wholly imaginary.

But suppose for a moment that the entire host was inclosed by the waters on the sides and the cloud above, and a sort of immersion effected. What then becomes of the "definite act" theory? Baptism, we are told, denotes "definite action"—not state or condition, even though that state be one of complete envelopment. It is not in point, therefore, to present an instance of envelopment, or being completely surrounded; it is necessary to show that the Israelites were themselves the immediate subjects of a definite act. Remember that it is the *mode*, the manner of doing a thing, that we are discussing, and not the state or condition when it is done. Immersionists claim that baptism invariably consists in mode, action, and not in a state of being immersed.

To present a case of complete envelopment, therefore, without respect to *how it came so*, is foreign to the issue. But if the Israelites were the subjects of some "specific action," or indeed of any action at all, then I ask *what was* that action, and who performed it? There can be but one answer to this question. No "specific action" was performed in behalf of the Israelites on this occasion. They simply marched under the command of Moses across the sea and on dry land; and yet they were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, or under the cloud, and in the sea. Nothing could be more fatal to the immersion theory than this instance; for if the *being in the sea* be admitted to be the baptism spoken of, it contributes nothing to the doctrine in question. As soon as it is admitted that a mere *state* of immersion is baptism rather than the act of immersing, then it must be admitted that, as mode has nothing to do with it, baptism may be performed by pouring, or by any one of a multitude of acts.

The truth is, it does not appear that in this instance there was any *literal* baptism at all; but while they were under the cloud and in the sea, they were baptized unto Moses. The apostle institutes an analogy be-

tween the baptism of the Israelites unto Moses and the baptism of believers unto Christ. His argument is to show that those that are once baptized unto Christ may fall away "from their own steadfastness;" for said he, "All our fathers were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; but with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness." The word baptism here seems to be used in the sense of *consecration*; they were all *consecrated* unto Moses—that is, committed to his care and leadership. The marvelous deliverance wrought for them at the sea, and by the cloud which protected them from their enemies all night, was the means of giving them wholly into the hands of Moses; and hence they are said to have been "baptized unto" him. No *formal* baptism appears. Until that time the whole multitude had been under the direct leadership of the Almighty. Moses did nothing until he was specially directed of God. The last great miracle of interference in their behalf was the opening of the sea before them that they might escape the wrath of the Egyptians. This seems to have satisfied them that Moses, their leader, was under a divine commission: "And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon



the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, *and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.*" This great wonder which the Lord did caused the people to believe at once in God, and to recognize the authority of Moses. Hence, they are said to have been "baptized unto" him—committed to his authority and leadership, to be conducted through the wilderness. This seems to be about the meaning of this baptism, so far as I can see; and, as said before, there does not appear to have been any literal baptism administered to them at all, much less a complete immersion. God himself, by miraculous interposition, committed them to Moses.

---

Romans vi. 4: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death."

Considerable use has been made by immersionists of Mr. Wesley's note on this text. He says: "Allusion is no doubt made to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion." The inference is that Mr. Wesley believed that immersion was *the* ancient mode of baptism, and that this passage made allusion to the custom of putting people under the water to baptize them. Mr. Wesley was not an exclusive immersionist, though he allowed that baptism

*might* be administered in that way. Pouring and sprinkling were equally valid to his mind, and far more practicable, and quite as ancient too, for that matter; for in his note on Colossians ii. 12, he says: "The ancient manner of baptizing by immersion is manifestly alluded to here, *as the other manner of baptizing or pouring of water is in Hebrews x. 22*" If Mr. Wesley's testimony as to the antiquity of immersion is good, his testimony as to the antiquity of pouring is good too. But after all, he may have been mistaken in supposing that any allusion was made in this text to the mode of baptism. The apostle does not attempt to define the mode of baptism by describing it as a burial. True, he says we are buried by baptism; but baptism, instead of being itself the burial, is presented rather as the agent or instrument of the burial. This burial we are not to understand as literal or physical, as though it was in earth or water. It is altogether figurative and mystical—buried "*into death*," not into water. We can much better understand the character of the burial if we consider it in connection with the death necessarily implied in it; for the burial must correspond exactly with the character of the death. If the death be physical, the burial must be physical;

but if the death be figurative and mystical, so must the burial be figurative and mystical. Says the apostle: "How shall we that are *dead to sin* live any longer therein?" This shows the character of the death implied. Now, when the obligation is to be enforced that no man who has once been baptized unto Christ, or consecrated unto him, can, with the least consistency, live a moment in sin, the apostle, preserving the idea of death, extends the figure, and says: "*Therefore* we are buried with him by baptism into death." The object is to show that we now and henceforth are to be oblivious to all sin, since in being buried with Christ the work of our consecration to him is complete.

Instead of there being any analogy or likeness between the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the manner of our baptism, as some suppose, the analogy is altogether between Christ's death and burial and resurrection and our death to sin and resurrection unto righteousness: "That *like* as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." But we do not con-

form to the likeness of his death in the mode of our baptism, but in a far deeper and more significant and real sense—that is, in our death to sin. We die unto the world as he did. Nothing whatever can be obtained from this text in favor of immersion or any other mode of baptism. Baptism may indicate the time of our consecration unto Christ, because it is the *formal* means of our being invested with his life and character, but it does not by its mode indicate any burial. It is not itself a burial.

But suppose we allow what immersionists assume to be the meaning of this text. Then it does not support their theory, for the word burial does not denote “definite action” any more than immersion does. To be buried is to be *covered out of sight*, without reference to how it is done. The *process* of burial has nothing to do with it. When a thing is buried, it is buried, be it done this way or that. The usual method is to conceal the object by pouring or heaping the earth upon it. So, after all, the theory gains no strength here.

---

Colossians ii. 12: “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him

through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”

What has been said of Romans vi. 4 is true also of this text, for they seem to be exactly parallel, the same language being employed. As in that instance, so it is true here that the burial corresponds with the character of the death, which is of course not literal, but figurative. It is a little more definite here, however, that the resurrection spoken of is not an emergence from water, inasmuch as it is said, “We are risen with him *through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*” If faith is the means, then the resurrection is unto righteousness.

I have stated the most that can be said in favor of immersion—to wit, the testimony of the lexicons, the instances of baptism recorded in the New Testament, and those scriptures that are supposed to teach the doctrine, either directly or by allusion. Aside from this there is no proof, except occasional instances in Greek literature where the word *baptizo* is used to denote immersion. We have seen how inconclusive this testimony is. Even the dictionaries do not support the immersion theory. It is acknowledged that divers instances occur where the word denotes an entire submerg-

ence, generally, however, without respect to the mode or manner by which it is accomplished. Such instances are to no purpose in the discussion, unless it can be proved that this Greek word means immerse, and *nothing but immerse*—that is, the *act* of immersing. If a hundred instances of undoubted immersion could be presented, and then one instance should appear where the word evidently meant something else, it would be fatal to the doctrine, which is that this word means one definite thing through all Greek literature.

The mistake of immersionists is in being exclusive. No one denies that their practice is at least justified or allowable under the original, primitive meaning of the word, though their “definite act” theory is not. But while immersion may be allowed by the Greek word, baptism by pouring or sprinkling is also valid. When one affirms that he *prefers* immersion, then he simply asserts his privilege of choice; but when he affirms that nothing else but immersion is baptism, he puts himself in array against all authority and proof. If it were necessary, we could admit all that is claimed for John’s baptism, and in fact all the evidence relied on to prove immersion, and then support our proposition, because it can be

---

demonstrated beyond the possibility of doubt that baptism may be performed by pouring and by sprinkling. This we hope to show in the course of what follows.

## CHAPTER V.

### PROOFS IN FAVOR OF POURING AND SPRINKLING.

WORDS are the signs of our ideas. We use words to express what we think. For lack of variety, the same word is sometimes employed to denote different shades of meaning. In this way words occasionally lay aside their primitive meaning altogether and assume a signification that is entirely new. This is usually the result of long and constant use. If baptize originally meant to dip, or to immerse in any way, it is not confined to that meaning now, nor has it been for centuries past. In process of time it assumed a meaning very different from the specific act of dipping, if it ever had that, and a state of complete submergence. We find from the best authorities that it means to *drench*, to *wash*, to *wet*, and, in fact, means a variety of things very close akin to these. The New Testament idea of baptism is a "washing," a ceremonial purification. This corresponds precisely with the definition given of the word by the most approved lexicographers, and is in strict harmony with the natural growth of language. It is not implied,



however, that the whole body should be washed, much less put under water. The purpose is not to cleanse. The washing is symbolical, and denotes inward and moral purity. That quantity of the purifying element that will serve this purpose is sufficient, and the manner of applying it is not important. To illustrate: Jesus, that he might teach his disciples a lesson of humility and subservience, proceeded on one occasion to wash their feet. Peter declined to receive so menial a service from his Lord. Jesus replied, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Peter then requested that not only his feet but that his hands and his head also might be washed. Jesus answered, "*He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.*" I am aware that this was not baptism, nor is it called a baptism; nevertheless, it was a washing, and very properly illustrates how the washing of a part of the body may symbolize the cleansing of the whole. Peter was as clean when his feet had been washed as if the whole body had been immersed, for the object was not to remove the impurities of the body but to be the symbol of a great lesson. The same may be said of Christian baptism. If the object were to literally wash the body for

the sake of its physical cleansing, then every part should be washed, and an immersion might be insisted on; but as baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience toward God," only that quantity of water is needful that appropriately symbolizes the cleansing and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

That this is the true signification of the word baptize in its religious use I think can easily be made to appear.

No matter what the dictionaries may define the meaning of a word to be its true signification must be determined by its use by the best writers and speakers of the language. A word taken in its connection in a sentence or discourse may be understood better than by any attempt given at its definition. It is for this reason that frequent appeals are made to the writers of the Greek language in order to obtain a clear and precise understanding of the word *baptizo*. Here is the final resort, and we must abide by the testimony of those who best understood their own language.

I shall not weary the reader with quotations from what is called the classical writings of the Greek language though many instances might be produced in support of our argu-

ment, but will rely on the use of the word as it occurs in the sacred writings. This will be found to answer every purpose, and quite sufficient to settle the controversy.

The word *bapto*, from which baptize is confessedly derived, is first in order. This, it is affirmed, contains the root idea of "dip," which is transmitted invariably through the whole family of derivatives; so that wherever we find the syllable *bap* there is also the idea of dip. If this is so it is difficult to see any reason why there should ever have been any derivatives at all. The one word with its single idea in its various inflections, it seems, would be quite sufficient to express all that need be expressed about the one act—dip. That the word *bapto* itself, however, does not invariably mean to "dip," or immerse, will appear from its use in sundry instances. Some centuries before Christ we find this word as a substantive applied to a class of people to distinguish them. They were called *Baptæ*, or Baptists. These were the priests of Cotytto, the goddess of lewdness. Says Anthon in his "Classical Dictionary:" "The name is derived from *bapto*, to 'tynge' or 'dye,' from their painting their cheeks and staining the parts around the eye like women." Eupolis, a writer of the old

comedy, born about 446 B.C., rebuked with great severity the profligacy and effeminacy of his age in a comedy entitled "Baptai." These priests, these licentious dyers of the cheek, the advocates of sensualism, suggested, no doubt, the significant title. This shows that the prominent idea of *bapto* in that age was not one of specific action of any kind, but that the word meant to "dye" or "stain," without respect to the process by which it was done; hence the appellative *Baptæ*, or Baptists, to denote those who used coloring on their cheeks to give a glow of sensualism. All idea of immersion is excluded here. But if the word meant nothing but to "dip," it is difficult to see how it could be used so generally to convey the idea of "staining" or "dyeing."

In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, made about 320 B.C., we find *bapto* in use also. It occurs in Daniel iv. 33: "And his body was *wet* [*ebaphe*] with the dews of heaven." The translation *wet* in our English Bible is no doubt correct, for that is precisely what happened to the king, who was driven out to feed on the pastures with the cattle and to be exposed to the dews of the night. Now, when this idea of wetting one with the dews of heaven came to be expressed in the Greek tongue,

the word *ebaphe* was used. He was "wet" (*bapted*, so to speak) by the dews. If the word *bapto* is used properly here—and I suppose we cannot doubt that it is—it carries neither the idea of dipping nor immersion. It is easy for any one to imagine what took place with the king. His body was wet, and no doubt profusely, but it was done by the *distillation of the dews upon it*. The king himself was not the subject of an act of any kind, nor was he immersed. He was simply "wet," and by the dews coming upon him. This is as clear as can be. There is no force of reasoning that can torture it so as to make it in the least favorable to immersion.

A feeble attempt at evasion is sometimes made by saying that the body of the king was as wet *as if it* had been dipped into the dews. That may be. We have no remark to make against the very profuse wetting by the dew, which may have been quite as complete as if the man had been dipped. Nevertheless, the fact remains that he was *not* dipped and that he was *not* immersed, but that he was "wet," which must have been done by the distillation of the dews upon him, as has been said.

This word *bapto* occurs again in Rev. xix. 13: "And he was clothed with a vesture *dipped*

in blood" (*beammenon*). The word *beammenon*, here translated "dipped," is in the Revised Version rendered "sprinkled," which is no doubt correct; for, no matter what the ancient meaning of the word may have been, it is very properly rendered "sprinkled" in this instance. "Stained" would have been better, however, for the object is to describe the condition of the vesture as "stained" or "dyed" with blood, and not to tell at all how it was done—whether dipped or sprinkled. It is impossible, though, that the vesture should have been dipped in blood. It was stained with it, but this staining was not done by dipping. Allusion is no doubt made here to that sublime prophecy in Isaiah lxiii., of which this is the evident fulfillment. There Christ is represented as treading the great wine-press and trampling his enemies in fury under his feet, and it is said of him: "Their blood shall be *sprinkled* upon my garments, and I will *stain all my raiment*." In the apocalyptic vision he appeared to his servant "clothed with a vesture *stained* with blood." Any one that will consider the metaphor a moment must see that the idea contained in the word is to "stain," and that the process was not by dipping the vesture into the blood, but by "spattering" or

sprinkling the blood upon it while riding in furious conquest over his enemies. It was for this reason, no doubt, that the revisers translate the word "sprinkle." Here, then, we see again that all idea of specific action and total immersion is out of the question. If *bapto* is the root of *baptizo*, and entails its meaning on its derivative, I think it will appear that baptism may be performed by sprinkling.

The word *bapto*, however, is never used in the New Testament to denote the Christian ordinance. We discuss it because it is supposed to give complexion to the meaning of *baptizo*, its derivative—the word transferred to our tongue, and Anglicized "baptize." We have seen that the root word does not invariably denote specific action, and that it does not necessarily mean an immersion, but is satisfied with a "wetting" or "staining," and that too by sprinkling. Testimony equally conclusive, if not more so, can be adduced to show that *baptizo* itself—the word for baptize—is not a word denoting specific action, and that it does not require a total immersion. Take the following examples:

#### BAPTISM OF NAAMAN.

"Then went he down, and *dipped* himself

seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God." (2 Kings v. 14.)

The Hebrew word here translated "dipped" is in the Septuagint version rendered *ebaptisato*—he baptized himself. It must be remembered that our English version is not a translation of the Greek text, but of the original Hebrew; hence "dipped" in our version is not a translation of the Greek word at all.

The question to be determined is, whether Naaman the Syrian did actually dip himself in the Jordan, or wash himself as the prophet directed. The latter seems to be the real truth in the case. In the first place, he was not commanded to go and *dip* himself in the river. The language is, "Go and *wash* in Jordan seven times." The Greek word is *lousai*, which implies no definite action nor total immersion, but the idea of purification. No matter by what process it is done, the demand of the word is met when the body is washed. But it is said that he *baptized himself according to the saying* of the man of God. I suppose this means that he observed strictly the directions of the prophet. If he did, then in all likelihood he did nothing more than wash, for that was what he was commanded to do. The words wash given in command and



*baptize* spoken of as the act of obedience are evidently used here synonymously. This is precisely what we have affirmed all along: the ruling idea in *baptize* being that of a washing or cleansing, and not one of specific action.

It is not at all probable that the entire surface of Naaman's body was affected with the leprosy. Only a small eruption, it seems, had made its appearance, for he said: "I thought he would surely come out, and stand, and call on the name of his God, *and strike his hand over the place.*" When the prophet commanded him to go and wash, therefore, the expectation was that Naaman would go and *wash the part affected*. Why should he wash his whole body? It was not through any sanitary property of the water that he was to be healed, but in obedience to the command of the prophet; and the natural inference is that in the absence of more specific directions he would simply wash the place that needed to be cured. Jesus, when he wanted to heal a blind man, said: "Go *wash* in the pool of Siloam. *And he went and washed, and came seeing.*" That is to say, the man went and *washed his eyes*, and thus secured his sight. This was all that was expected of him. Still, the command was not "Go wash *your eyes*," but "Go wash in the pool."

The man understood it. So when Naaman was commanded to go and wash we are doubtless to understand that he was simply directed to wash the eruption, and not necessarily the whole body.

Even if we suppose this command to have been given according to the law of Moses for the cleansing of a leper, no total immersion would be required. That law was (Lev. xiv. 8): "And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and *wash himself in water.*" No definite act is prescribed—such as dip or plunge—and none is even implied; nor is the idea of total immersion implied. The leper might, indeed, go into the water and bathe himself, but the object was to *wash*, to get clean; and the only advantage of getting into the water was to get the free use of it and the better to effect the cleansing. Not one man in a thousand who takes a bath totally immerses himself. Every presumption, therefore, is against the supposition that Naaman *plunged* into the Jordan seven times before he was healed. He *washed* himself.

#### BAPTISM FROM A DEAD BODY.

Sirach xxxiv. 30: "Being baptized [*baptizomenos*] from a dead body and touching it

again, what profit is there in his cleansing?"

This is a quotation from the apochryphal book of Sirach, and refers, no doubt, to the law of Moses that required every one that touched a dead body to submit to a ceremonial purification. Num. xix. 16-19: "And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open field, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel; and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave; and the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even."

One thus cleansed is said to be "baptized from a dead body;" that is, from the evil effects of having touched one. This ceremonial cleansing consisted, as we have seen, in the *sprinkling* of a mixture of the ashes of a red heifer

and pure water upon the defiled person; and one thus purified is said to have been baptized.

If the word baptize is not misapplied when used to describe this sort of thing—and we dare not say that it is—then it is very evident that baptism may be performed by sprinkling, for that was precisely the process of purifying a man from a dead body. To be sure the unclean person had, on the seventh day, to “wash his clothes and bathe himself in water,” but that was not the ceremony that cleansed or purified him from the contamination of a dead body. The man that sprinkled the water upon him had to wash his clothes too. So that the bath in the conclusion of the service was simply a prescription for the cleanliness and decency of the persons. That which really effected the cleansing was the application of the red heifer ashes and water which was strictly enjoined to be *sprinkled* upon the unclean. And if one declined or refused to do this, “that soul should be cut off from Israel *because* the water of separation *was not sprinkled* upon him.” Nothing is plainer than that the purification was by sprinkling. And if so, then it follows that “baptism from a dead body” is done by sprinkling.

## BAPTISM OF JUDITH.

Judith xii. 5-7: "And the servants of Holofernes brought her into the tent, and she slept until midnight; and she arose at the morning watch. And she sent to Holofernes, saying, Let my lord now command that thy handmaid may go out for prayer. And Holofernes commanded his body-guard not to hinder her; and she remained in the tent three days, and went out nightly into the valley of Bethulia and baptized herself [*ebaptizeto*] *in the camp at the fountain of water.*"

The state of the case is this: Nebuchadonossor, King of Syria, made war against Israel. An army under command of Holofernes came up against Bethulia, a city where the Israelites were in camp. Holofernes, seeing that the supply of water was derived from some springs outside the walls of the city, cut the aqueduct, and besieged the city, taking possession of the springs. When the Israelites were greatly straitened a fair Jewess undertook to deliver her people. She left Bethulia by night and fell into the hands of the Syrians ostensibly for protection, but with the real purpose to gain an audience with the general, and by strategy overpower him with her charms that she might finally destroy him. Holofernes received her

kindly and, being impressed with her story and her beauty, "commanded his body-guard not to hinder her," but to give her the freedom of the camp. She went out nightly—that is, out from the tent, and baptized "*in the camp at the fountain,*" which was one of the springs. This baptism was performed in connection with her religious devotions. The place was a spring which was in the camp. Now there is not the least probability that this woman immersed herself in the spring. It is said in the narrative (chapter vii. 10): "And he [Holofernes] placed all round about *a hundred men at every spring.*" We cannot imagine for a moment that a woman that observed such scrupulous neatness in her person and attire at this time for a specific purpose would be so immodest as to immerse herself clothing and all in one of these springs. And it is simply preposterous to suppose that she would lay aside her raiment in the presence of an army of soldiers and do such a thing. Besides, these springs were the main supply of water for the army, both for drinking and other purposes, and it is not to be presumed that the guard would permit any one to strip off and bathe in one of the springs. It is evident therefore that Judith did nothing more than *purify* herself at one of the fountains,

which, as every one must know, amounted to nothing more among the Jews than an ablution, which was performed by pouring or sprinkling.

#### BAPTISM BY INIQUITY.

Isaiah xxi. 4: "My heart panted; *fearfulness* affrighted me; the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me." Septuagint Version: "My heart wanders; *lawlessness baptizes me*" (*anomia me baptizei*). Lexicographers tell us that *baptizo* very frequently means to *stupefy*, to make *drunk*, to *temper*, to *overwhelm*, to *completely subdue*. Of course no reference is made to the way or manner in which these things are done, but to the state or condition described by the words. A piece of metal is tempered by the dropping of a fluid upon it, or by plunging it in a fluid, or by some other process; but it is not the dropping nor the plunging that is called a baptism, but the *effect* upon the metal. A man may be made drunk by taking a few drops of a drug; again, it is the *effect* of the drug upon him. One may be entirely confounded by questions, or completely overwhelmed with grief; but in every instance it is the *state of being* that is denoted by the word *baptizo*, and not the process. The example under consideration is very much in

point. "Lawlessness baptizes me." The prophet was not made the subject of any definite act. Rumors of war and of the violence of invading forces overwhelmed him with fear and astonishment. The state of mind produced in him is what is meant. Our English Version very properly renders it "affrighted." One can see at a glance that this is directly antagonistic to the immersion theory.

Another example of this use of the word occurs in the New Testament where our Lord's sufferings are mentioned as a baptism. "I have a baptism to be baptized with." Comment is hardly necessary. All acknowledge that this refers to the final agony of the Son of God. There is no possible means by which to resolve this baptism of suffering into one of mode. Jesus speaks of drinking the "cup"—the bitter cup of death—and the draught was one of such agony that he was greatly straitened until it was accomplished.

#### DIVERS BAPTISMS.

Heb. ix. 10: "Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings [*diaphorais baptismois*] and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation."

The conjunction "and" before "carnal ordi-



nances" is an interpolation, made we know not how, and should be omitted. It does not appear in the Revised Version. As it now reads "carnal ordinances" are something additional to the "meats, drinks, and baptisms;" whereas the words are intended only to be exegetical or explanatory of those things. The object is to inform us that the meats, drinks, and divers baptisms were themselves carnal ordinances. The Jewish economy therefore stood in meats and drinks, and divers baptisms, and it is worthy of note—for that is the point that I wish the reader to keep in mind—that it stood *only* in these things. No matter what entered into the ritual of the Jewish service, it was either a meat—that is, something to be eaten—or a drink, or a baptism for some purpose or other—divers baptisms, or, as it is translated, "divers washings."

Now if one will take the pains to read the law of Moses that prescribes the various purifications by water and blood, he will find that instead of so many *immersions*, there were no immersions at all. In all that economy, that which sanctified and purified was invariably done by pouring or sprinkling. Take an instance. Heb. ix. 13: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer *sprink-*

*ling* the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh," etc. That this was one of the carnal ordinances there can be no doubt, for it sanctified to the *purification of the flesh*." It was therefore a part of the Jewish economy, which stood *only* in three things—meats, drinks, and divers baptisms. But this sprinkling of the blood upon the unclean was not a "meat," and it was not a "drink." Does it not follow, therefore, that it was a baptism? There was nothing else for it to be. But this was done by *sprinkling*, says the apostle. I therefore conclude, by the authority of the inspired writer, that baptism may be performed by sprinkling. Such proof as this amounts to mathematical precision. And yet we hear people say that there is not a word in the New Testament, not a *word*, in favor of baptism by sprinkling.

#### JEWISH BAPTISM.

Mark vii. 1-4: "Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with *unwashed* hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

And when they come from the market, except they wash [*baptisontai*], they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing [*baptismous*] of cups, and pots, brazen vessels and of tables."

These washings, practiced so commonly among the Jews, were not simply for the sake of decency, but were ceremonial purifications supposed to be enjoined by the law of Moses. The Jewish economy stood, as we have seen, largely in "divers baptisms." Under the tradition of the elders, the most scrupulous regard was paid to these ceremonies daily. If one touched a dead body, there was a certain formula for his cleansing. But under the tradition of the elders, this and like ceremonies were widened out into almost constant use for fear they *might possibly* have touched something. It was thought to be almost sacrilegious to omit the baptism of one's hands before taking a meal. On one occasion Jesus dined with a Pharisee (Luke xi. 37, 38): "And he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that he had not first washed [*ebaptisthe*] before dinner." The table-ware and every thing connected with the meal had to be purified, lest something

that was defiled entering in with the food might defile the man.

Now these washings, or ceremonial purifications, are denominated in the New Testament "baptisms." The question before us, then, is to determine if possible how these Jewish baptisms were performed. If that can be done, and done satisfactorily, it will settle at once and forever the meaning of the word baptize as it was generally understood among the Jews, and as it denotes a religious ordinance. And when we discover what the *Jews* understood by baptism, we are certainly not far from a proper understanding of the word as it applies to the Christian ordinance. Fortunately for our purpose we have, on good authority, a most minute description of the custom of the Jews with respect to these things. John ii. 1-6: "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there *six water-pots of stone, after*

*the manner [or custom] of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece."*

Observe, first, that these water-pots were set there "after the manner [or custom] of the purifying of the Jews." which, as we have seen, was to *baptize* cups, pots, brazen vessels, tables, etc., before eating.

Second, there were *six* water-pots present for this purpose, and not one large basin big enough to put things in. This afforded the greater convenience as the water-pots could be distributed, and thus made accessible.

Third, the capacity of these jars—"two or three firkins a piece." The largest estimate of a firkin is about eight or nine gallons. Each of these contained two or three firkins—no great quantity, indeed.

Now, I ask, is it at all likely that any immersion was practiced on this occasion? Does any one suppose that all the vessels, and even the *tables*, or *beds* as they are sometimes called—tables that they reclined on at their meals—were taken up and actually put into the jars and immersed? No one, I dare say, will entertain such a thought. It is impossible. The process was by sprinkling the water sparsely about upon the articles. And what was done at the marriage in Cana in this way is a fair

example of the custom of the Jews in this matter. Mr. A. Campbell, in his version of the New Testament, says (Mark vii. 3, 4): "They eat not till they have washed their hands *by pouring a little* water upon them; and if they come from the market, *by dipping* them." This attempt by Mr Campbell to make the purification of the hands on coming from the market something different from what was practiced at other times is altogether unwarranted. There is no law of the Jews, nor any tradition of the Jews, that made any such distinction. The custom was the same on all occasions before taking meals, and under all circumstances. The Pharisee marveled at Jesus (Luke xi. 38) "because he had not first *baptized* before dinner." He had not been to any market, and it was the omission to *wash his hands* that made the Pharisee marvel. If, as Mr. Campbell says, this washing of the hands was done *ordinarily by pouring a little water on them*, then it was done on all occasions in that same way, for there was no difference. The fact is, the words *nipsontai* and *baptisontai* in Mark vii. 3 are used synonymously. That is all.

#### BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST.

I do not think that any thing further is need-

ed to demonstrate the truth that baptism may be performed by sprinkling. Two or three examples of baptism actually performed in this manner, and that too according to the statement and on the authority of inspired men, ought to be sufficient to satisfy the most incredulous. I now propose to show that baptism may also be administered by *pouring*. And to do so effectually we have only to advert to that notable instance of the word to describe the influence and gifts of the Holy Ghost. John the Baptist foretold (Matt. iii. 11): "He shall *baptize* you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Jesus himself, after his resurrection from the dead, and before his ascension to the right-hand of the Father on high, commanded his disciples (Acts i. 4, 5) "that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; *but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*" This promise, announced originally by the prophets and renewed by John, was verily fulfilled "not many days afterward" on the day of Pentecost. That we may know what took place, *and how* it was done, we have only to turn and read the account given in Acts ii. 1-4: "And when the

day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost*, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This was the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It consisted simply in giving them the power and influence of the Spirit of God. Their minds were illumined, and their hearts cheered and comforted, and a remarkable degree of knowledge was imparted unto them. It was as if a gracious shower of blessings had fallen upon them. The prophet Joel, describing this event (Joel ii. 28) years before, said: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will *pour out my Spirit upon all flesh*." Isaiah said also (Isaiah xxxii. 15): "*Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field*." And again Isaiah said (xliv. 3): "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will *pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring*." What these prophets described as a pouring out of



the Spirit of God upon the people, John and Jesus both called the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Peter too, alluding to the baptism of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, declares that it was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, and quotes the very language of that prophecy, and applies it. That this was a baptism, then, there can be no doubt whatever; and that it was done *by pouring* is equally certain.

A repetition of this baptism by the Holy Spirit after the same manner took place in the house of Cornelius (Acts xi. 15, 16): "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost *fell on them, as on us at the beginning*. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, *John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost*." This was another instance of the fulfillment of the promise of the Father made by John that the Holy Ghost should baptize them; and it took place after the same manner that it did on the day of Pentecost—*by pouring*. So striking was it that Peter immediately called to mind the words of Jesus: "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said," etc.

This settles the question, therefore, that the word *baptize* does not denote specific action,

and that in the inspired writings it does not mean an immersion, but means something that may be done by *pouring*. If *mode* must be accepted, then we prefer sprinkling or pouring to the exclusion of all others, for we have proof positive that Scripture baptisms were performed in this way.

This baptism of the Holy Ghost announced by John's ministry, and held up continually in contradistinction to the baptism which he administered by water, and of which his baptism was no doubt typical in some measure, being administered by pouring, affords a very strong presumption that John baptized in that way too. Peter was familiar with both, and when he saw that the Holy Ghost *fell on* an audience to which he was preaching, *baptizing* them, his mind adverted in a moment to John's baptism and the promise that he had made. If John immersed the people in the river, why should Peter ever see a symbol of his baptism in the *descent* of the Holy Ghost?

Various attempts have been made to get rid of the argument in favor of pouring from the baptism of the Holy Ghost, but to little purpose. The fact still remains, and will forever remain, that that baptism was done by pouring; and as the Holy Ghost knows the mean-

ing of words and of things, we have a right to conclude that *any* baptism, especially that which is symbolical of the baptism of the Spirit, may be administered in this way.

But it may be said—and in fact has been said—that the pouring, the *act* of pouring, in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, was not the baptism, but the baptism was the *result* of pouring. It is thought that in this way a sort of immersion can be made of the case after all. But we have never assumed that the *pouring* of the Holy Spirit constituted the baptism on that occasion. We have denied repeatedly that baptism consists in specific action of any kind; and it therefore does not consist in pouring, but is the *result* accomplished. It was the *influence* of the Holy Spirit on the minds and hearts of the disciples that made the baptism, and this, as we have seen, was *poured out*, shed upon them, and very plainly attests the truth of our theory that baptism may be performed by pouring. Nor can we discover in this result of the outpouring of the Spirit the least semblance of an immersion. It was not the Spirit that filled “all the house where they were sitting,” and that they are sometimes said to have been immersed in; it was the “sound as of a mighty rushing wind” that filled the

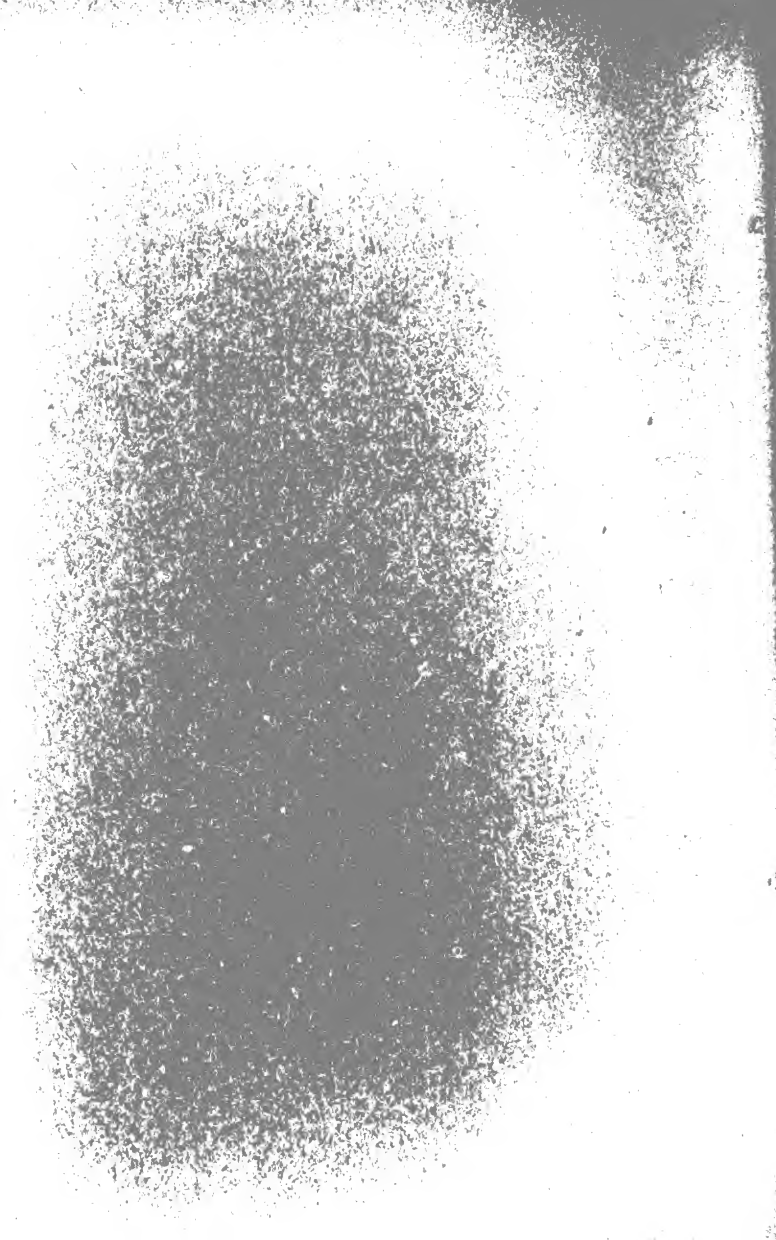
place. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost," and not the Holy Ghost filled with them. True, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent, and we all live and move in him, but this extraordinary manifestation of his power was confined to the hearts of the disciples, and was given by pouring, as it were.

If it be said that the Holy Spirit cannot be literally poured out, our answer is that that is true. The Spirit is not a material substance, and cannot, in any literal sense, be poured. The language must be taken in a figurative or tropical sense, and not in a physical one. But this, instead of weakening the argument, gives cogency and strength to it. The very foundation of the figure is found in the similitude that exists between a literal, physical baptism and this figurative outpouring of the Spirit. If no such likeness prevailed, it would be foolish—nay, absurd—to call that work of the Holy Spirit a baptism which in fact found no resemblance in any baptism expressed by the language of the tongue. Reasoning, then, from the figurative to the literal, wherein there must of necessity be a striking correspondence, we are led to the conclusion that baptism properly administered is by pouring. As the Christian institute, then,

---

was appointed to be in some measure a symbol of the gracious influences of the Divine Spirit upon the hearts and consciences of men, and as that heavenly baptism was done by pouring, so we conclude that it is altogether appropriate to administer the ordinance of baptism itself after the same manner.

*THE END.*

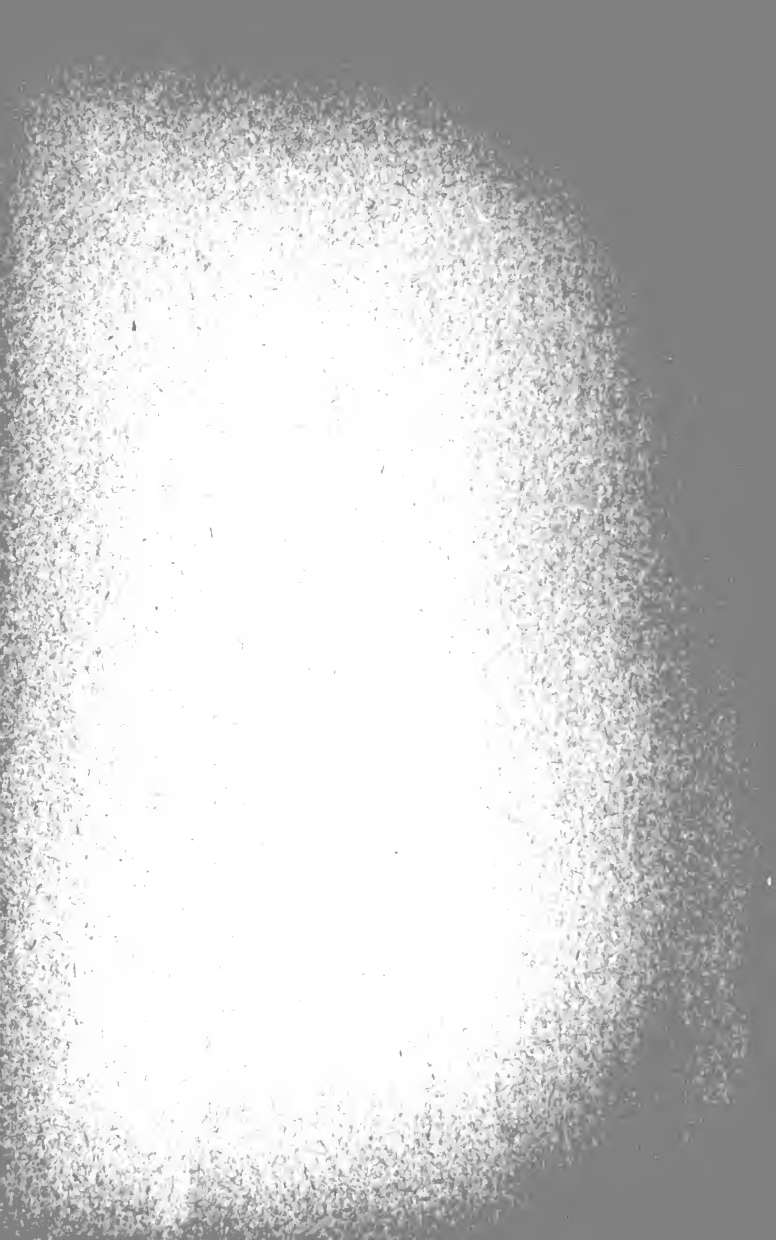


# INDEX OF SCRIPTURE TEXTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
Genesis xii. 1-3.....	84	Acts iii. 25.....	97
Genesis viii. 14.....	84	Acts viii. 36-38.....	192
Genesis xv. 1-5.....	84	Acts xi. 15, 16.....	235
Genesis xvii. 13.....	85	Acts xv. 6.....	49
Leviticus xix. 8.....	220	Acts xvi. 34.....	131
2 Kings v. 14.....	218	Acts xix. 1-5.....	30
Isaiah xxi. 4.....	225	Romans ii. 28.....	91
Isaiah xxxiii. 15.....	234	Romans iv. 18-22.....	68
Isaiah xli. 3.....	234	Romans iv. 23, 24.....	71
Daniel iv. 33.....	214	Romans iv. 23.....	129
Joel ii. 28.....	234	Romans vi. 3, 4.....	55
Matthew iii. 5, 6.....	178	Romans vi. 4.....	11
Matthew iii. 11.....	233	Romans vi. 4.....	111
Matthew iii. 11.....	109	Romans vi. 4.....	203
Matthew xviii. 3.....	133	Romans xi. 17.....	101
Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.....	118	Romans xv. 8.....	95
Mark i. 4.....	28	Galatians iii. 8.....	96
Mark i. 1-5.....	178	Galatians iii. 15-18.....	72
Mark vii. 1-4.....	228	Galatians iii. 27.....	112
Mark ix. 31.....	15	Galatians iii. 28.....	106
Mark x. 38.....	157	Ephesians ii. 11, 12.....	98
Mark xvi. 16.....	32	Colossians ii. 12.....	14
Mark xvi. 16.....	128	Colossians ii. 12.....	206
Luke xi. 37, 38.....	229	1 Corinthians x. 1, 2.....	197
Luke xi. 38.....	232	Titus iii. 5.....	60
Luke xii. 50.....	158	Hebrews ix. 10.....	226
John i. 28.....	182	Hebrews ix. 13.....	227
John ii. 1-6.....	230	Hebrews x. 1-4.....	25
John iii. 5.....	34	James ii. 21-24.....	69
John iii. 25.....	176	1 Peter iii. 21.....	51
John iii. 26.....	183	Revelation xix. 13.....	215
Acts i. 4, 5.....	233		
Acts ii. 1-4.....	233		
Acts ii. 38.....	43		
Acts ii. 38.....	108		
Acts ii. 38.....	125		

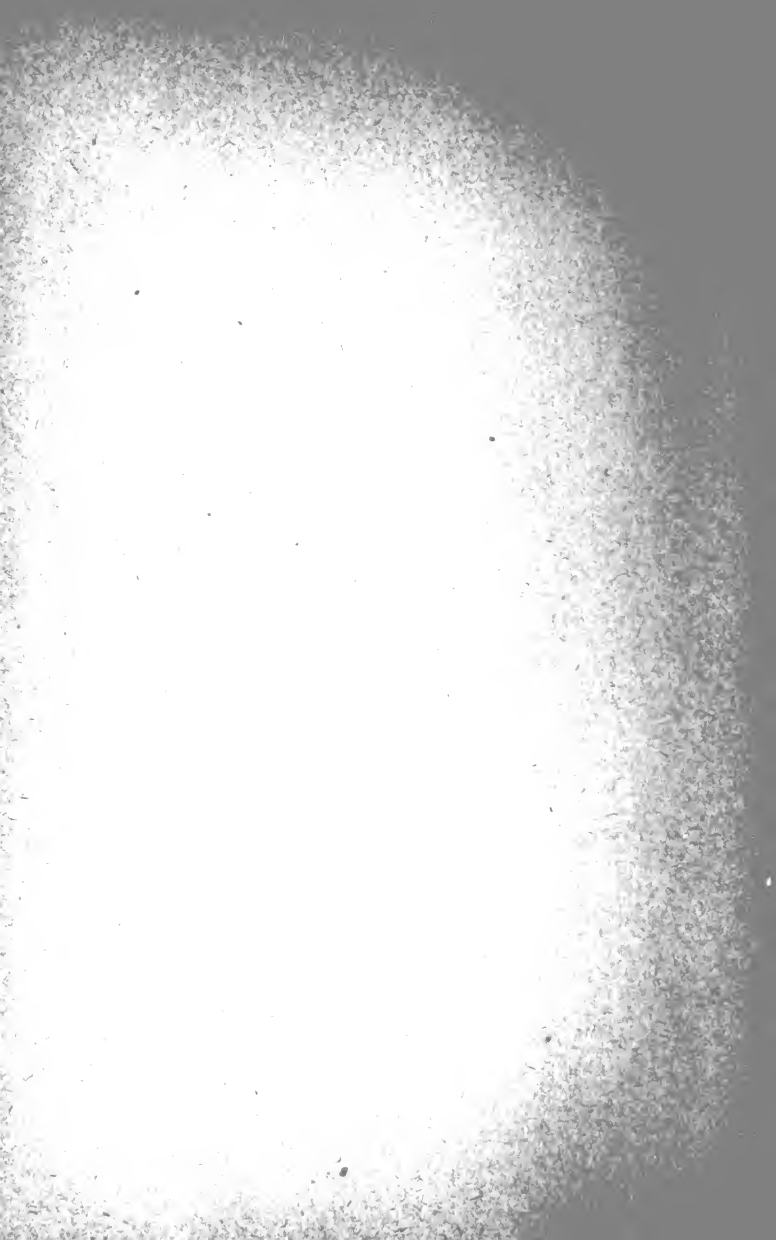
## *Apocrypha.*

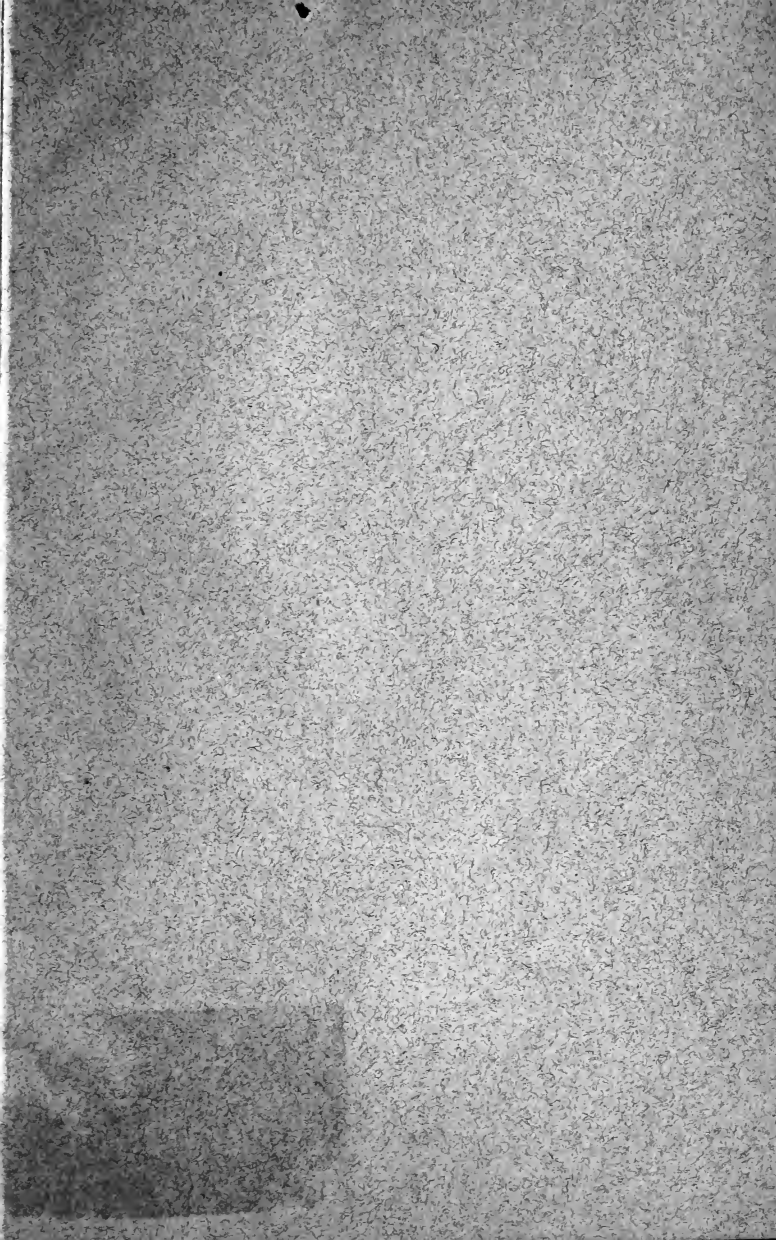
Judith xii. 5-7.....	223
Sirach xxxiv. 30.....	220











Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date: Sept. 2005

## **PreservationTechnologies**

**A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION**

111 Thomson Park Drive  
Cranberry Township, PA 16066  
(724) 779-2111

BV  
81

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 665 057 0